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J. Chorley sculp.

P. 36.

Abraham offering up Isaac.

BEAUTIES OF COLLYER.

SELECTIONS

FROM

THEOLOGICAL LECTURES,

BY

REV. W. B. COLLYER, D. D. F. A. S.

COMPILED BY J. O. CHOULES.

Boston:

LINCOLN AND EDMANDS.

1833.

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PREFACE.

THE rapid multiplication of reading individuals among the friends of religion, is one of the most auspicious signs of the times. Our sabbath schools and bible classes have created habits of thought, and a spirit of research, and the younger members of our families and churches are hungering and thirsting for information.

It is of immense importance that suitable aliment be provided for this mental appetite. It was excited by our efforts, let us not suffer it to become morbid. We led to the tree of knowledge; let us guide to the tree of life, whose fruit is for the healing of the nations.

The youthful thousands of our Israel on leaving the sacred enclosure of the sabbath school, will look for occupation of the mind, and their habits and opinions will depend in a high degree upon the character of the books they read. If passive impressions lead to active habits, it is a matter of high concern that we place in the hands of youth works that may produce a happy influence in sentiment and conduct.

It may not be improper to look round, and see how works of excellence may be brought forth from sources hitherto inaccessible to the community. It has appeared to me that the writings of the Rev. Dr. Collyer would afford fine materials for a volume worthy of a place in every christian library. Dr. Collyer is the able and faithful pastor of a large congregation in the vicinity of

London. His popularity has been so great for nearly 30 years, that he has been taxed beyond any of his brethren in requests for his acceptable services on public occasions ; yet such has been his industry, that he has furnished seven large octavo volumes for the press, beside many occasional pieces, and his fame will not rest simply on the traditional eloquence of his pulpit labors, but he will be known to posterity as the able divine, in his Lectures on the Facts, Miracles, Parables, Prophecies, Doctrines, and Duties of the Sacred Scriptures. Only one volume (on Facts) of these Lectures has been printed in America ; and that, it should be known, was the first fruit of the ministry, and written when its author was a youth. The ripe productions of his matured experience and profound attainments, are seldom found upon this continent, except in a few of the choicest ministerial libraries. Feeling satisfied that Dr. Collyer's writings require only to be known to receive admiration and afford instruction, I have selected the following extracts, which afford a fair specimen of his Lectures in general. The contents of this volume are placed under the titles of **FACTS, MIRACLES, PARABLES, &c.** in order to indicate the Volumes from which the selections have been made.

It may not be unsuitable to present the opinion of an eminent reviewer upon the merits of Dr. Collyer as an author. "His researches, his various learning, his accumulation of interesting facts, his presenting old and familiar truths in a new and striking manner, entitle him to rank high as a theological writer. His style is remarkably elegant and polished, and there is a rich vein of evangelical piety running through all his works."

J. O. C.

Newport, R. I. Jan. 1833.

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BEAUTIES OF COLLYER.

FACTS.

REVELATION.

REVELATION has done that for man, which neither reason nor philosophy could effect. In the exercise of the powers of our mind, upon the scenery by which we are surrounded, we rise to the great Parent of all; and deduce some conclusions respecting his nature, from the operations of his hand: yet have we seen that these conclusions were frequently erroneous. The religion of nature cannot go further than to teach us that there is a God, all-powerful, all-wise, all-good; and this is more than it taught the heathen world perfectly. But it leaves us ignorant of our relation to him; it is unable to unravel the more interesting parts of his character; it cannot develope the harmony of his attributes. A thousand inquiries are suggested, to which we receive no answer. We are placed in circumstances for which, on principles of reason, we cannot account; and perceive the existence of evil, unable to discover its source. We labour under a curse, from which, by the light of

nature, we see no deliverance; and are in possession of an existence, for which we perceive no adequate end. Those things which are the most interesting, are also the most uncertain; and that which we know naturally, only serves to kindle a thirst to learn more, which, on the principles of nature and reason merely, cannot be satiated. For what has the light of philosophy done, but rendered darkness visible? It has strained the powers of reason and imagination, till they could be stretched no further; yet without bringing one hidden truth to light. It has perplexed and bewildered the mind by contradictory hypotheses. It has exhausted the charms of eloquence, and enervated the force of argument, in establishing favourite systems upon the ruins of those which preceded them, only to be pulled down in their turns, to make way for others equally absurd, and equally false. After dragging us through mazes of intricate reasoning, it leaves us precisely at the point at which it found us, all uncertainty, obscurity, and suspense. "The world by wisdom know not God." We appeal to facts—they are before you—and we confidently expect your decision upon their testimony.

It is here that Revelation takes up the process, and disperses the mist of uncertainty. It professes not, indeed, to *reason* upon subjects beyond the comprehension of the human mind; but it reveals the *fact*, and requires our assent to it: which we may safely give, although we do not comprehend

the whole of that which is revealed. Those parts which we *do* comprehend, we conceive to be true and wise; may we not reasonably conclude that those which we do *not* completely understand, are equally so; and that the deficiency is in our natural powers, and not in the subject investigated? Those who call upon you to relinquish your Bibles, have not attempted to fathom the depths of futurity. They rather wish you to consider the scanty period of "three score years and ten," the boundary of the hopes, the joys, and the expectations of man. They place beyond death—ANNIHILATION! The thought is insufferable! Say, you who have dropped the parting tear into the grave of those whom you loved—is this a consoling system? Are the most tender connections dissolved to be renewed no more? Must I resign my brother, my parent, my friend, my child—FOR EVER? What an awful import these words bear! Standing upon the grave of my family, must I say to its departed members, "Farewell! ye who were once the partners of my joys and sorrows! I leaned upon you for support; I poured my tears into your bosom; I received from your hands the balm of sympathy—But it is no more! No more shall I receive your kindness; no more shall I behold you! The cold embrace of death clasps your mouldering bodies, and the shadows of an impenetrable midnight brood FOR EVER upon your sepulchres!" No! We cannot relinquish Christianity for a system which conducts us to this fearful close! When scepticism shall

have provided a substitute for our present hopes, we will listen with more confidence to its proposals.

And yet the cry of modern philosophy is against the only pledge of immortality afforded the human race. Where is the *gratitude* of such conduct? Are we not indebted to it for all the illumination which we enjoy? Did Paganism disappear, till Christianity exerted her benign influence? Did not man in a state of nature demand and offer human victims? And did not Revelation stay the effusion of blood, and abolish these infamous rites? Is it not friendly to science and civilization? Is it not inimical to whatever is injurious to the interests of man? Where is the *wisdom* of such an opposition? Before you banish this, produce a better system: shew us "a more excellent way:" teach us morality more sublime! What is its *crime*? Sedition? Impossible! It "puts us in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work." Want of philanthropy? Surely not! Some may bear its name who do not breathe its spirit: but their bigotry and illiberality are not chargeable upon Christianity—Christianity, which teaches "to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, showing all meekness unto all men." It substitutes faith for good works; and its professed teachers set up opinion against morality? It is a gross calumny! It blends these nominally jarring principles: it assigns to each its proper place: it requires the influence, and commands the agency, both of the

one and the other ; it joins together those things which men frequently separate ; and with equal consistency and plainness, traces the causes and effects of salvation : it has prescribed—"these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God, be careful to maintain good works."

Extinguish the light afforded by this despised volume, and you are precisely in the situation of the heathen world. I close the Bible ; and there remains to you a hope without a foundation, assaulted by a thousand dismal apprehensions. The planets which roll over your head declare matchless wisdom, and incalculable immensity. They write in the heavens the name of Deity ; and the attributes of power, majesty, and immutability. But where is the record of pardon ? It is neither written by the sun-beam, nor wafted on the breeze. Where is the record of immortality ? It is not inscribed on the face of the heavens, nor revealed by the operations of nature. "The depth saith, 'It is not in me !' and the sea saith, 'It is not in me !'" Look abroad into creation. "Canst thou by searching find out God ? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection ? It is high as heaven ! what canst thou do ? deeper than hell ! what canst thou know ? The measure thereof is longer than the earth ; it is broader than the sea !"

SENSE, REASON, AND FAITH.

SENSE, Reason, and Faith, may be considered as progressive steps, by which the mind ascends to the invisible God. Creation is an object of Sense. The light which shines upon my path is an emblem of the purity of Deity. The meridian sun is an image of *his* uncreated glory, who is the centre of every system. Whether I gaze upon the heavens, and trace the revolutions of orbs which move there: or follow the eccentric comet through its protracted sphere, so far as it is visible: or examine the insect that flits by me, or the blade of grass upon which I trample; I perceive the operations, and adore the wisdom of the Divinity. His voice speaks in the thunder-storm; and when his lightning bursts from the bosom of the dark cloud, "my flesh trembleth for fear of his judgments." Fanned with the breath of the morning, or the gale of the evening; standing in this plain, or on that mountain; dwelling on the dry land, or floating on the surface of the deep—I am still with God.

Reason takes up the process where Sense fails. It deduces inferences respecting invisible things from those "which do appear." Nature wafts the mind to the Creator. From its majesty, Reason argues his greatness; from its endless variety, his bounty; from its uses, his wisdom. The foundation of the Temple of Knowledge is laid deep, wide, and lasting, on the face of the universe.

Reason seizes such materials as Sense can furnish, and carries on the building. But, alas, the edifice remains incomplete! The architect is skilful, but the materials are scanty. Those which are most essential to crown the work, lie far from this country beyond the grave. In vain imagination lends her assistance, and attempts to explore the land of spirits, where only they are to be found. Bewildered, exhausted, and powerless, the artist sits down in silent despair.

Here Faith takes up the tools which fell from the hand of Reason. Revelation ascertains all that futurity had concealed; and Faith draws her materials from Revelation. The building rises, and shall continue to rise, "till the top-stone is brought forth with shouting." For "faith is the substance of things hoped for; the evidence of things not seen."

Sense cannot introduce us to the invisible Majesty of heaven. It can only present us with his image. The pure, ethereal light—the blaze of a noontide sun—the azure heavens, and revolving orbs—the mysterious, eccentric comet—the insect curiously wrought, and the grass simply elegant—the thunder-storm—the lightning, vivid and irresistible—the morning and evening breeze—the verdant plain, and the elevated mountain—the solid earth, and the rolling seas—these all reflect the glory of Deity, all bear the impress of his hand, all develope his wonderful agency—but they are not GOD HIMSELF.

Reason ascends a little higher; and from the volume of nature, through the medium of sense, unfolds a little of the divine nature, and a few of his perfections. His immensity, his wisdom, his liberality, may be inferred from every thing which I behold: but, alas, I am still at a distance from God! What is he to *me*? What does he require? Have I disobeyed the dictates of reason at any time? or neglected to serve him? If so, will he pardon sin? and how am I to receive forgiveness? Neither reason nor sense can answer these inquiries, nor silence the clamours of conscience.

It is Faith rising on the wing of Revelation that introduces me into the heaven of heavens, unlocks the mystery, and unfolds the seven-sealed book. Here I read the covenant of mercy. Here I receive the promise of pardon. Here I learn all that I would know, and anticipate all that I shall hereafter enjoy. The pressure of the ills of life is lightened; and I “endure as seeing Him who is invisible.”

BEAUTIES OF NATURE.

Who can behold the fair structure of the heavens and the earth without feeling a powerful desire to understand their origin, and to be acquainted, in some measure at least, with the Architect who reared them? Cold is the heart which kindles not into devotion, when the skies blaze with a thousand lamps; and grovelling the mind, which rises not

through the system of the universe to the Great First Cause! Blind is that understanding which cannot see, amid the vicissitudes of seasons, and the changing blessings of the spring, the summer, the autumn, and the winter, the superintendence of a faithful friend, and the bounty of an unwearied benefactor! Insensible is that man who can look upon this grand machinery, and live in the bosom of creation, yet perceive no harmony, no order, no loveliness, no design; or upon whom they make no impression! Let the friend of *my* choice be one who can relish the majesty of nature: who on the close of the day, from the summit of some lofty mountain, will watch the rising cloud, and observe the evening spread her grey and dusky mantle over the features of the landscape, till they are lost and extinguished: whose eye is fixed with delight on the stars as they break one by one through the increasing obscurity; and who, withdrawing from the world, and penetrating the forest, can rejoice with the laughing scenes around him, and can relish retirement, nor envy the dissipation of life, as he hears its noise swelling on the gale of the evening. The friend of God, and the admirer of nature, is the man whom I would choose as my companion, and love as my own soul.

THE BEING OF A GOD.

If the world be not the production of chance, and if it be not eternal, it follows that it must have been created—in order to which there must have

been an infinite Architect. We have seen human reason led into labyrinths, from which it could not be extricated but by the friendly assistance of Revelation. To the eye of nature, all is obscurity. We have received decisive evidences from notorious facts, that when an investigation of these subjects has been attempted by men of the first talents independently of this infallible guide, the mortifying and inevitable result has been, bewildered systems, trembling uncertainty, clashing, contradictory theories. "There is a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen; the lion's whelps have not trodden it, nor hath the fierce lion passed by it." These secret paths are the operations of God, sought out by those who love him, and discovered only by the direction of his word, and the agency of his spirit. Admit the being of a God, and all is clear and luminous. Every difficulty vanishes; for what cannot Omnipotence perform? "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God." Can he deserve a milder name who holds his irrational creed? All nature proclaims his existence; and every feeling of the heart is responsive to its voice. The instant we begin to breathe, our connection with God is commenced, and it is a connection which cannot be dissolved forever. All other unions are formed for a season only; time will waste them; death will destroy them; but this connection looks death in the face, defies the injuries of time, and is commensurate with the ages of eternity. The moment

we are capable of distinguishing between good and evil, our responsibility to God is begun—it commences with the dawn of reason, it looks forward to the judgment seat as its issue. At every period, and under every circumstance of human life, man still draws his existence from the “Fountain of life:” he may be cut off from society, but cannot be separated from God: he may renounce his fellow men, but never can burst the bonds of obligation by which he is held to his Maker, till he shall have acquired the power to extinguish that immaterial principle within him, which can never be subjected to decay, or to dissolution. The last sigh which rends the bursting heart, terminates the correspondence between man and man; but strengthens the union between God and man. All the springs of enjoyment and of existence are hidden in the Deity, and the fates of the human race are suspended in the balances sustained by his unshaken arm. It is an object of the first magnitude, to learn something of the Being with whom we stand thus intimately and inseparably connected; who is light and warmth in the sun, softness in the breeze, power in the tempest, and the principle which pervades and animates, which regulates and sustains universal nature: but to deny his existence, is the madness of desperation, and the temerity of presumption; of all insanity it is the worst; and of all ingratitude, it is the deepest. I see him rolling the planets in their orbits, controlling the furious elements, and stretching an irresist-

ible sceptre over all things created. I see the globe suspended and trembling in his presence; and the kingdoms of this world, absorbed in his empire, rising to distinction, or falling into irrecoverable desolation, according to the council of his will. My heart is not at ease. I am instructed, but not tranquillized. The infinity of God overwhelms me; his majesty swallows me up; his inflexible justice and purity fill me with dismay; his power makes me afraid. It is this volume which first brings me acquainted with him as God, and afterwards as a friend: which represents him at once the Creator and Redeemer of the human race; and while his attributes command my admiration, his mercy forbids my terror.

THE DELUGE.

THE world have ever been blind to their best interests; have ever sported with their own ruin. When Noah laid the first beams of his ark across each other, it is probable he did it amid the insulting shouts of an hardened multitude. The building advanced. Some admired the structure; some derided his plan; some charged him with enthusiasm, or with insanity; more were lost in sensuality; and all united in the desperate resolution to bury his admonitions in the grave of oblivion. Still he entreated; still they spurned his instructions; still the edifice rose day after day; still the voice of gaiety was echoed on every side. With strange

infatuation, they stopped their ears; and refused to "listen to the voice of the charmer;" who solicited them with unwearied perseverance, and reasoned "so wisely." The roof is at length covered in. The danger becomes every hour more imminent. He presses his warnings upon them with increased energy; but, pointing to the unclouded sky, they laugh him to scorn, and load his ministrations with contempt. It is closed! The last exhortation has been given; and he has wiped the last tear of insulted tenderness from his cheek. Ye blind, insensible mortals! what charm has "holden your eyes," that ye cannot see? Discern ye not the cloud that gathers over yonder mountain? The brute creation see it; and hasten for shelter to the ark. The family of Noah close the procession; they have entered their refuge; and even now "the door is shut!" Oh! it is too late! Fraught with heavy indignation, the tempest lowers fearfully. Every "face gathers blackness." Yet scarcely is it perceived, before a new scene of ruin presents itself. Ah! there is no escaping the hand of God! The skies pour an unabating torrent. An hollow groan is heard through universal nature, deploring the impending destruction. The birds and beasts which remain, excluded from the ark, scream and howl in the woods, whither they had fled for shelter. The sea assaults the shore; the restriction of heaven is removed; it passes its ancient boundaries; it triumphs already over the plains, and gains upon the hills. The ark floats

upon its bosom. The despairing multitude fasten upon it an eye of distraction: they implore in vain the assistance of the prophet whom they had despised, and whose pitying eyes are again suffused with unavailing tears. He can bear it no longer. He retires to the innermost recesses of his vessel. In the phrenzy of despair, parents clasp their children to their cold bosoms, and flee to the highest mountains. Where else could they resort for shelter? for the boundless sea saps the foundation of the firmest edifices. What is their desperation as the waves approach the summit! It is equally impossible to descend, to rise higher, or to escape. They have prolonged a miserable existence a few hours, only to sink at last!—It is all in vain! “The waters prevail exceedingly; every high hill is covered; and fifteen cubits” over their loftiest summits, the flood rises in haughty triumph!

PRIDE OF THE HEART.

It was pride that dictated the haughty language of the king of Babylon, when, from the battlements of his palace, he looked down upon his beautiful city, and said—“Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?” O, how the “pride of his heart deceived” him! “While the word was in the king’s mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; the

kingdom is departed from thee!" The "same hour was he driven from men," and his "dwelling was with the beasts of the field:" his reason was withdrawn, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven." Behold, he that would be thought a God, is become less than a man! Nor were the balances of power again put into his hand till he had been brought to confess, "that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will;" and to acknowledge, in a repentant decree, that "those who walk in pride, he is able to abase."

Happy had it been for his successor, if this awful display of divine justice had wrought in his heart obedience. But Belshazzar learned not wisdom from his grandfather's humiliation. He exceeded his great progenitor in impiety. He stood on the pinnacle of empire, till he was giddy with gazing upon the rolling world beneath him! The forces of Cyrus surrounded the city; but, trusting in its impregnable strength, the defence of the river, and the greatness of his stores, he laughed his enemies to scorn. The feast was spread, and the revellings had commenced. Death hovered round his court, and destruction brooded over his city, while he was sunk in senseless security. And now, the voice of joy, and the noise of riot, resound through the palace. The monarch calls upon his nobles to devote the hours to gaiety; to scatter their fears to the winds; to drink defiance to the warrior advancing to their very gates; and, to fill the meas-

ure of his iniquity, to add insult to the miseries of his captives, to crown dissipation with sacrilege, he requires, last of all, the vessels of the sanctuary, that they might be profaned by their application to not merely common uses, but to the vile purposes of debauchery. It is done. The king is lost in unbounded pleasure, and intoxicated with unlimited power. In one moment the voice of riot ceases—silence, as profound as the stillness of the grave, reigns through the whole palace—every tongue is chained—every eye is fixed—despair lowers on every countenance—the charm is broken—and the night of feasting is turned into unutterable horror! See! yonder shadow, wearing the appearance of the fingers of a man's hand, glides along the wall of the palace opposite the monarch, and writes, in mysterious characters, "MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN." What has changed that youthful countenance? What has chased its bloom of beauty, and drawn on it the strong lines of misery? Behold this king who lately dreamed that he was more than mortal, trembling on his throne! "The joints of his loins are loosed, and his knees smite one against another!" What the army of Cyrus could not do, a supernatural hand, writing four little words, has effected; and his soul melts within him through terror! But say, What is the cause of this premature distress? Perhaps yonder inscription declares the permanence of his kingdom; and inscribes, in those hidden characters, the destruction of his enemies? Ah no! Conscience

read too well the handwriting ; and interpreted the solemn sentence of impending ruin, long before Daniel explained the inscription ! While all was riot during the first part of the night, and dismay during the remainder, Cyrus had diverted the river from its course, had entered the city through its exhausted channel, unperceived, and was now at the palace gates. The empire was lost ; the captive Jews were liberated ; and “ that same night was Belshazzar, the king of the Chaldeans slain.” Behold another, added to the innumerable sad evidences, that the “ pride of the heart ” fatally “ deceives,” and finally ruins those who cherish it.

MEMORIALS OF GRATITUDE.

As Abraham journied in the road by which he had descended into Egypt, he came again to an altar, which he had before set up, in his way thither. Sweet are the recollections of kindnesses received ; and pleasant the memorials of mercies departed ! If we were to accustom ourselves to rear tokens of remembrance for every assistance which we derive from God, and to erect an altar where we receive a mercy, how many evidences for good would be presented in the retrospection of our lives ; and the review of the past would create confidence for the future. The moss might grow over the pillar, and the fire of the altar would go out ; but the inscription would be fresh on the

tablet of memory, and gratitude would kindle the purer flame of affection in the heart. Thus Abram reared an altar in his way to Egypt; and found it again on his return. Thus Jacob elevated a pillar at Bethel, after his vision of God; and with what feelings did he revisit it, when he was delivered from his fears, and increased in his blessings! Thus "Samuel took a stone, and set it up between Mizpah and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, 'Hitherto hath the Lord helped us!'" It is not necessary that we should erect these outward memorials: but let the pillar be raised in our bosoms, and the inscription read in our lives!

DESTRUCTION OF SODOM.

WE have selected for our contemplation the moment when the attention is arrested by the conviction of impending danger; and the point of history where the interest of the reader is excited in anticipation of its issue. The sacred writer discovers in this, as in every record of his pen, singular ability in touching the heart; while he preserves a wonderful simplicity throughout the whole narration. All is nature in his descriptions; and his assertions bear on their very face the impress of truth.

With what grandeur the scene opens upon us. The day dawns, which is to vanish from the eyes of the wicked before its meridian; and they gaze, unconscious of danger, upon the earliest glories of

the east, which are so soon, as it respects them, to be extinguished in eternal night. Lot emerges from the polluted scenes of depravity, an instance of the goodness of God ; and escapes the desolation which demonstrated his just severity. *“And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here ; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city.”*

The night is the season of alarm and of danger. As the gloom thickens, every object wears a portentous aspect. Its solemnity deepens the cloud of affliction ; and throws a darker shade over sorrow itself. It is the time for awful deeds. Then the murderer stalks abroad to destroy ; and his “feet are swift to shed blood.” Then the adulteress spreads her toils to ensnare. Then violence is prepared to “smite with the fist of wickedness ;” and the thief treads softly, that he may “break through and steal.” Then the sinner hastens to iniquity, in imaginary security under the covert of midnight, and says, in the ignorance and presumption of his heart, “Tush ! God doth not see !” It was at night, that the destroying angel passed through Egypt to slay the first-born : at night, that the sword of the Lord penetrated the camp of Assyria, and destroyed an hundred and eighty-five thousand men : at night, that the shadow of a hand wrote on the wall of Belshazzar’s palace, the departure of his kingdom, the close of his glories and of his life together, and the scrutiny of justice with

its perilous consequences. But the day has ever been regarded as the season of security. The first ray of the morning chases the phantoms of the imagination, and terminates the horrors of fancy. Light discovers real peril, and bears with it the means of escape. When the day breaks upon us, it scatters peace, and joy, and safety in its smiles. Ah, how little do we know where danger lurks, and when the dream of happiness shall be broken! Sodom escapes the peril of the night, to fall by unexpected vengeance in the morning! "*And while he lingered*"—who that had a heart to feel, and connections to relinquish, could refrain?—"while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the LORD being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city." A gentle constraint is laid upon him to snatch him from ruin. It is thus that we feel a divine power gently attracting us from the world to the cross: we are drawn with "the cords of love:" no violence is imposed upon our will in leading us from the paths of death: but we feel and acknowledge, that it is HE, "who worketh in us to will and to do his own good pleasure." It is thus, when our wandering hearts "follow lying vanities, and forsake their own mercies," that God sends some gentle and salutary affliction to chastise our folly and to bring our spirit home to its rest.

"And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look

not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed." Judgment once awakened, is not always directed to discriminate characters; and the righteous are sometimes permitted to suffer in the general calamity. It is not safe to dwell in the tents of sin; and those who take up their abode in the tabernacles of the wicked, must be content to share their portion, and their punishment—at least, in the present life. Nothing short of a total separation from them can afford security: for to linger on the plain is as hazardous as to tarry in the city. "*And Lot said unto them, O, not so, my Lord.*" In the very midst of danger, and while the cloud of ruin hangs over his head, self-willed man cannot refrain from opposing his opinions to the arrangements of Deity; and it must be "according to his mind," or he will scarcely be satisfied with his deliverance. "*Behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight*"—should he therefore presume?—*and thou hast magnified thy mercy, which thou hast showed unto me in saving my life;*" should he not therefore be satisfied? Is the goodness of God a reason why he should tempt his forbearance? "*and I cannot escape to the mountain*"—why not? What shall hinder when God leads the way? what can successfully oppose, when he commands?—"lest some evil take me, and I die!" O thou of little faith! wherefore didst thou doubt? Was not HE who led thee forth from the midst of a people given over to utter desolation, strong to deliver? Was

he not able to preserve thee? And had he not given a tacit pledge of security, in the very command which he issued? "*Behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one*"—it is a small request that I prefer, in comparison with the unsolicited mercy which thou hast already manifested; or, it is a little city, and may well be spared in so wide and general a destruction as thine offended justice meditates—" *Oh, let me escape thither, (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live.*" What is the punishment which awaits the man who dares to lift his little plans to a competition with the wisdom of Deity? Let us adore the long suffering of God! Heaven lends a gracious ear to this supplication: "*and he said unto him, See, I have accepted thee concerning this thing also, that I will not overthrow this city, for the which thou hast spoken.*" How consistent is this with the character of God, who delighteth to have mercy, and to forgive. Lot had an high gratification in seeing this little object of his compassion escape the devastation of its vicinity, if benevolence urged his plea; but if selfishness dictated it, as the narrative seems to insinuate, he was greatly disappointed: for although his request was granted, his terrors suffered him not to derive from it the advantage which he proposed; since he afterwards abandoned the retreat which he had chosen, and fled to the mountain, whither God had first directed him, "for he feared to dwell in Zoar." "*Haste thee, escape thither;*" thy presence disarms my wrath, and

withholds my righteous vengeance; *for I cannot do any thing till thou be come thither.*" Behold the value and importance of one righteous man! It was the lip of infallible truth which said of his disciples, "Ye are the salt of the earth!" "*Therefore,*" in remembrance of the successful plea of Lot, "*the name of the city was called Zoar;*" which signifies *little*, and relates to the argument which its intercessor used. Most of the names given to persons, and to things, in the scriptures, bear a reference to some signal circumstances, more nearly, or remotely connected with them.

"*The sun was risen upon the earth, when Lot entered into Zoar.*" This calm is perfectly natural, and agrees with almost every account transmitted to us of tempests, earthquakes, and great convulsions of nature. We know that the wind usually falls, and that there is a profound serenity diffused over the atmosphere, before a storm. The former part of that day in which Lisbon was destroyed by an earthquake, was uncommonly fine; and the danger was not even apprehended, till an unusual subterraneous noise, and a slight trembling of the ground, preceded, for a few moments, the first great shock, which almost levelled the whole city. This same agitation of the earth was almost universal, and extended nearly over the whole globe; and in every place where it was felt, the same tranquillity was observed to reign, before the calamity was endured. This calm, however, is unspeakably dreadful! Who can read this single verse

without shuddering? As the destruction was unexpected, it was the more terrible; and as it was sudden, it admitted of no escape. The sons-in-law of Lot mocked his admonitions; and they were roused to a sense of their importance and truth, only by the hand of death. Let this consideration prepare us for a still greater event, in the solemnities of which we must all participate; and which will be equally sudden and unexpected; for “as it was in the days of Lot, even so shall the coming of the Son of man be!”

“*Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah, brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven, and he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground.*” Some commentators translate the words “brimstone and fire,” *brimstone inflamed*; and the interpretation which they build upon this translation is, that brimstone inflamed, in the Hebrew style of writing, signifies neither more nor less than lightning. It is reasonable to conclude, that this lightning penetrated so far into the veins of bitumen, with which these plains are known to be impregnated, as to enkindle the combustible matter; which would quickly communicate its heat and flame to the cities, and to the whole country, more entirely and expeditiously than the lava of a burning mountain lays waste the lands over which it flows: and after consuming all that was capable of such a destruction, formed the heavy, fetid, unwholesome lake, called

the Dead Sea, from its wide expansion, and the stillness of its waters. Justin observes, respecting this sea, that it cannot be moved by the winds, by reason of the large quantity of bitumen immersed in it; which also renders it incapable of being navigated. The same remark will not be found to apply to the same sea, in the present day; as we have instances of some modern travellers having ventured to bathe in it: but this also may be accounted for on the same principle; the diminution of the bitumen; which is continually removed, by persons on the spot, as it emerges from this singular lake. Neither is it true that no bird will adventure to stretch his wing across it, as some ancient writers have asserted—for many have been observed to sport along its dreary banks: but the salt with which it is impregnated is inimical to vegetation; its waves retain a sufficient degree of malignity to endanger the health of those who are rash enough to plunge into its unnatural waters; and it retains a sufficient degree of desolation, to justify the description of the destruction suggested in the present Lecture, and to confirm the general account of antiquity, making a reasonable allowance for the alterations which time may be supposed to have effected.

“But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.” A learned writer* ob-

* Dr. Taylor, in his *Scheme of Scripture Divinity*.

serves, "The sulphureous storm did not begin to fall upon Sodom, till Lot was safely arrived at Zoar. But his wife looked back *before* he reached Zoar: for she looked back *from behind him*, as he was going to Zoar. When she looked back, Sodom and its plains appeared as pleasant as before. She looked back with affection to the place, and regret at leaving it: according to the import of the original word. This implied unbelief." She wavered—"she stopped by the way, and left her husband to go by himself"—in the fluctuations of her mind, "she would proceed no farther; and might be at a considerable distance from Zoar, and so near to Sodom, as, probably, to be involved in the terrible shower, and thereby turned into a nitro-sulphureous pillar:"—or at least to be suffocated by it, and incrustated with it. "This gives proper force to our Lord's admonition, *Remember Lot's wife*. Let the judgment of God upon *her*, warn *you* of the folly and danger of hankering after, and being loath to part with, small and temporal things, when your life and happiness, the greatest and most lasting concerns, are at stake."

SARAH'S GRAVE.

HUMANITY requires us to drop a tear, also, over the grave of the once lovely Sarah, who "died in Kirjath-arba." Twelve years after the trial of his faith, this heavy stroke of calamity fell upon him; "and Abraham came to mourn for

Sarah, and to weep for her." Let not the unfeeling and the gay, break in upon the sacred privacy of domestic sorrow! It is not the semblance of grief which spreads a cloud over the forehead of yonder venerable patriarch: real and unaffected anguish causes those tears to flow. She had been long the companion of his life—she had shared his joys and sorrows—she had sojourned in tents with him, a stranger in a strange land—she had regarded him with fondness up to her hundred and twenty-seventh year. Her communion and friendship had sweetened his distresses, and lightened his labours. The dissolving of this long connection was loosening the fibres which entwined about his heart; and while he exhibited the resignation of a saint, he felt as a man. Before "the cave of the field of Machpelah" closes its mouth forever upon the precious dust, let the young and the beautiful come and look, for the last time, upon the person whose loveliness had kindled desire in every bosom, and had more than once ensnared her husband. Let them gaze upon the dishonour of that cheek, which even time had respected, and age had spared. Let them learn a lesson of humility, while they behold the triumphs of death, and hear a husband entreating "a possession of a burying place, that he may bury his dead out of his sight," and hide *that* form from his eyes, which he had never before beheld but with rapturous delight!

PATRIARCHAL FAITH, OR TRIAL OF ABRAM.

It is impossible to pass through Canaan without turning aside to the land of Moriah, and contemplating the sacred mountain on which a patriarch's faith triumphed over a father's feelings. According to the promise of God, Isaac was born when Abraham was an hundred years old. He had seen his son preserved from the perils of infancy. His mother had gazed with unspeakable pleasure upon her child—the son of her vows, who was now fast pressing towards manhood. The parents of this amiable youth were looking forward to a peaceful dismissal from the toils of life, and to the happy termination of a tranquil old age. Abraham “planted a grove in Beersheba,” and rested under its shadow. This quiet retreat, alas, is not impervious to sorrow! This delightful serenity resembles the stillness of the air which usually precedes a tempest—it bodes approaching trial. “And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Take now thy son, thine only son, Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I shall tell thee of.” What a command was this! To stain his hand with the blood of a lamb which he had fed, would be a task to a feeling mind; but the requisition is for a “Son.” To select *one* from a numerous family, would be a cruel effort. Let the mother look

round upon her children when they are assembled before her like a flock, and say which she could spare from among them! But the demand is, "take thine *only* son"—in whom the life of both parents is bound up. To part with an only child for a season, opens the fountain of a mother's tears, and adds to the grey hairs of his father. To lose him by death, is to cause them to go bitterly in the anguish of their soul all their days. What was it, then, to offer an only son as a sacrifice, and to be himself the priest who should plunge the knife into his bosom? But he obeys—obeys without a murmur! He rises early in the morning to immolate his child, and to offer, on the altar of God, all that he held most dear in this world. On the third day, the destined mountain marks its elevation along the line of the horizon, and meets the eye of the afflicted parent. The servants are not permitted to witness the awful scene, the solemnity of which they might disturb by lamentations—or the execution of which they might prevent by force—or, wanting their master's faith, might draw from it inferences unfavourable to religion. At this moment, to awaken in his bosom extreme torture, "Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, here am I, my son. And he said, Behold, the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, My son, God shall provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together." But we will no longer attempt to scent

the violet, and to paint the rainbow. We must draw a veil over the scene ; for who can enter into a father's anguish, as he raised his hand against his child ? and who shall be bold enough to attempt a description of his rapture, when Heaven, which had put his faith to so severe a trial, commanded him to forbear, and indeed provided itself a victim ?

THE ORPHAN BOY.

How interesting he appears to every feeling mind ! A child robbed of his mother, excites universal commiseration, and commands affection from every bosom. We look forwards with anxiety to every future period of his life ; and our prayers and our hopes attend every step of his journey. We mingle our tears with his, on the grave of her, whose maternal heart has ceased to beat ; for we feel that he is bereaved of the friend and guide of his youth ! His father would, but cannot, supply her loss. In vain the whole circle of his friendships blend their efforts to alleviate his sorrows, and to fill the place occupied by departed worth : a mother must be missed every moment, by a child who has ever known, and rightly valued one, when she sleeps in the grave. No hand feels so soft as her's—no voice sounds so sweet—no smile is so pleasant ! Never shall he find again, in this wide wilderness, such sympathy, such fondness, such fidelity, such tenderness, as he experienced from

his mother! The whole world are moved with compassion for that motherless child: but the whole world cannot supply her place to him!

THE GOD OF NATURE.

WHY does my heart beat with pulsations of rapture, when my eye measures yonder heavens, or glides over hills and vallies along the surface of this beautiful world? When the dew sparkles upon the ground, a kindred tear glitters upon my countenance: but it is not the tear of sorrow; it springs from a well of unspeakable pleasure which I feel flowing within my bosom! Is it merely the softness or the grandeur of the scenery by which I am surrounded, that affects me? No! but my spirit meets a Parent walking invisibly on the globe that he formed, and working manifestly on my right hand and on my left. All these lovely objects are the productions of his skill, the result of his wisdom, the tokens of his benevolence, the imperfect images of his greatness. Every thing demonstrates the being and perfections of Deity. I see him empurpling the east before the sun in the morning, and wheeling the orb on which I live round upon its axis. I behold him throwing the mantle of darkness over me in the evening, and kindling the skies into radiance by unveiling suns and worlds without number and without end. I gather a flower, and am revived by its fragrance; I see shade melting into shade infinitely above any com-

bination of colours, which art can produce. To aid the organ of vision, I inspect, through the microscope, an insect. I see it painted into a thousand brilliances, and displaying a thousand beauties, imperceptible to the naked eye. I stand convinced that no mortal pencil could delineate the loveliness of its form. I perceive a grain of corn peeping above the earth. It scarcely rears its light green head over the ground. I visit it day after day, and month after month. It gradually increases. It is an inch—it is a foot in height. Now it assumes a new shape. It vegetates afresh. The ear begins to form—to expand—to fill. Now it has attained its growth—it ripens—it is matured. I have narrowly watched the progress of vegetation; and have seen its advancement. I beheld every day adding something to its height, and to its perfection: but the hand which raised it from “the blade to the ear, and to the “full corn in the ear,” escaped my researches. I find a crysalis, and watch the secret movements of nature. The insect is shrouded in a living tomb. It begins to stir—it increases in strength—and the butterfly breaks from its confinement. Meeting with ten thousand such wonderful productions every day—I recognise in them the great Spirit that animates all created nature, and I am compelled to acknowledge, “O Lord our Governor! how excellent is thy name in all the earth; and thou hast set thy glory above the heavens.”

I pass on to the animal creation. There I perceive other operations, and am overwhelmed with

new wonders. The principle on which they act, and which is termed instinct, is the gift of God ; and it appears to differ from the immortal principle in man, in its confinement to a certain inferior standard, and in its direction to one particular pursuit, adapted to the peculiar nature and exigencies of its possessor. I see the timid acquiring courage while they have a maternal part to perform ; and, forgetting to measure the disproportion between their own strength and *that* of their antagonist, boldly assaulting those superior animals, which designedly or unintentionally, disturb the repose of their young. Their instinct enables them to perform those things to which it is particularly adapted, with more order and facility than man, with his superior understanding can accomplish ; and, with the simple tools of nature, they effect *that* which the complex machinery of art cannot produce. All the animate creation, from the elephant, and “that great leviathan,” among animals, to the bee, and the ant, among insects, still conduct us to the invisible God ; and we say “The earth is full of thy riches ; so is this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts. O Lord, how manifold are thy works ! in wisdom hast thou made them all.”

HUMANITY IS CONCERNED IN THE SPREAD
OF THE GOSPEL.

ONE should have imagined that the gospel of Jesus could have no enemies. It breathes only peace. It has but one subject—to promote the felicity of mankind. It sweetens every connection of human life. It strengthens the cause of philanthropy. The only favour it entreats is, that men would love themselves: and while it pours a thousand blessings on the present transient existence, and lightens all the trials of the way, it shows wretched, erring man, “the path of life.” And yet every man’s hand is lifted up against it! From its birth to the present hour, every age has blended all its wisdom and all its force, to crush Christianity. Had it required the man to sacrifice “his first-born for his transgression, the fruit of his body for the sin of his soul”—who would have wondered that nature should rise up against it?—Yet, strange to say, the horrible religion of the Gentiles, which actually did require this unnatural offering, was supported, and defended against Christianity, with vehement obstinacy. The rage of man, on the one side, exhausted itself in defence of altars on which their children had been immolated; and on the other, was directed against a religion which hastened to overthrow these blood-stained altars, and which said, “Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven!”—Had it destroyed the peace and exis-

tence of society; had it scattered war and bloodshed over the earth; had it trampled on the dearest rights of human nature—why then, some reason might be given for the wrath of man against it. But it disseminates “peace and good will to man,” abroad upon earth, while it brings in a revenue of “glory to God.” We can take its most furious persecutor by the hand, when he raves, “Away with it from the earth!” and say, “Why? What evil hath it done?” And he shall be unable to assign a single reason for his conduct: unable to lay one sin to its charge: unable to prove that in any one instance it is injurious to society: unable to deny that it has been productive of the most beneficial effects—that it has removed all the clouds of heathenism—that it has extinguished the fires through which wretched parents caused their children to pass, and in which the fruit of their body was consumed—that it has given to the world a new and perfect code of morality—that it has thrown open the gates of mortality—that it has removed the bitterness of death—and that it has established, solely and unaided, the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead: he shall be compelled to admit all this, and yet, without a single reason, merely from his natural enmity to it, he will continue to despise, to reject, and to persecute it! Humanity is concerned in the progress of this religion: Humanity raises her voice in favour of revelation, and entreats, “Rise up, Lord, let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee, flee before thee!”

MAN THE SAME IN ALL AGES.

CUSTOMS change with years. Yet is man in the present day, what he was in ages that are passed ; only he was surrounded by different scenes, he was led by different habits. His peculiar situation, his local circumstances, exist no longer : but he had the same principles common to human nature, the same feelings, the same necessities, the same expectations. Our fathers felt, like ourselves, the pleasures of hope, the anguish of disappointment, the pantings of suspense, the throbbings of joy, the pangs of fear. They lived uncertain of the future. They trembled as they approached the brink of time. The world which they now inhabit, and the mysteries of which are now laid ^{upon} ~~upon~~ to them, was once as secret, and as much an object of the mingled emotions of apprehension and of hope, to them as to us. There were moments when their faith was not in lively exercise, and when the fear of death was as powerfully felt in their bosoms as in our own. Then they fled to this word for support, and derived from it the sweetest consolation. Yes, —and we are hastening to be what they are. After a few years, we shall join their society. We are floating down the same stream, over which their vessels have already passed : borne along by the same current, we sail between the same winding banks, pass through the same straits, meet with the same rocks and quicksands, and are agitated by the same tempests : but they have safely an-

chored in the haven, and we are stretching all our canvass to make the same point of destination, that with them, we may be sheltered from the storm forever! We avail ourselves of the directions which they have left behind them, because in all ages "the Author and Finisher of our faith" is the same. He will be to future generations, what he was to them, what he is to us. When our posterity shall trample upon our dust, when our very names shall have perished from the record of time, when new faces shall appear on this wide and busy scene of action, the name of God will remain to our children, the same as it appears this night to us, the same as it was announced to Moses from the bush which burned with fire and was not consumed—"I AM THAT I AM!"

ONE MAN DIFFERS FROM ANOTHER.

IN respect of TALENTS, man differs from man. We sometimes meet with a spirit emerging from its native obscurity, and attracting the admiration of the world. Every thing conspired to throw the man into the shade. Poverty frowned upon his birth, and shut the doors of knowledge against him. When he entered life, he mingled unnoticed with the crowd. But none could close the book of nature before him, and no disadvantages could suppress the vigour of a spirit, born to rise, and to astonish. Following only the benignity of nature,

he brings from his mind such ample stores of observation, and discovers so much native genius, that he ascends at once to eminence ; and like a sun veiled from his rising, reveals at once to the world his glory in its noontide brightness. Hard by him stands one, *forced* into notice. He was born noble and affluent. Every possible mean of improvement was put into his hand, and the book of knowledge was opened to his view. No pains were spared, no expense was withheld, in his education. And yet his very elevation is painful. It is *that* of fortune, and not *that* of nature. He is always placed in a conspicuous situation, to be always despised ; and the literary advantages which he enjoyed, have been unable to correct the deficiencies of nature. They descended upon his unfruitful mind, like the showers of the spring upon the sands of the desert, which imbibe the rain, but return neither grass nor flower. In respect of LITERATURE, one man differs from another. Here stands a favoured son of science, who has access to nature in all her parts through the avenues of deep and learned research. He has made the dead, and the living, contribute to his pleasure, and to his improvement. He has plundered time of all the treasures, which he had snatched from falling empires, and rescued from the greedy grave of oblivion. And he moves among his fellow men, an angel for illumination, and an oracle for wisdom. There stands his neighbour, gazing with unconscious eyes upon the page, which he is devouring. He sees no beauty in that ora-

tion—no force in that train of reasoning—no conclusion in that demonstration—no order in those starry heavens. All access to the tree of knowledge is denied to him ; and he turns from the page full of genius, of energy, of intelligence, and says, “ I cannot read it, for I am not learned ” In respect of RANK IN SOCIETY, one man differs from another. One is born to sway a sceptre, and to rule a powerful empire. Nations tremble at his frown, and princes are his servants. His navy thunders along every hostile shore, and the sword of his army is drunk with the blood of the slain. He travels—and a whole country is in motion. Harbingers precede his face, guards encompass his person, a willing people bow the knee to him. Not daring to lift his eyes, yonder peasant retires, as the equipage passes, and turns his rough hand, rendered hard by labour, to the most menial services. He eats bread, and drinks water, with heaviness of heart. A large family multiplies upon him. His children cry with hunger. He gives them all—he divides the last loaf among them, and returns himself faint to the labour of the field, without tasting a morsel, lest he should diminish their scanty pittance. And yet he is also a child of humanity ! In respect of RELIGIOUS PRINCIPLE, one man differs from another. Here, is a man who receives every blessing as the gift of Heaven with thankfulness, who bends with lowly resignation under the stroke which robs him of his comforts. In his habitation, however humble, the voice of prayer and

of praise is constantly heard ; and his comforts, however few, are augmented by the benign influences of piety. There, is a wretched man, deemed happy by the world, who never bowed his knee before God his maker ; and never knew a gratification beyond pampering his appetite, and amassing wealth. And yet both are men, and equally responsible to God.

REASON AND REVELATION.

WE are indebted to God himself, for all the information which we possess, in relation to either his nature or his operations. He furnishes the medium through which he is seen in the visible creation, in the arrangements of providence, in the scheme of redemption : and all that we are able to comprehend of “ life and immortality,” is “ brought to light by the gospel.” The human mind requires a medium through which it may discern God, as the eye requires a medium through which it may see. As that medium to the eye is light, so is the medium of the spirit, illumination. It is in vain that creation subsists around me, except I have an *organ of vision*. To the blind man it is annihilated. The works of God exist, but not to him : he is insensible of their beauties, he never was permitted to admire their symmetry. And it is in vain that we possess an organ of vision, unless some *medium* be furnished through which it may operate. I ascend the mountain at midnight, and look from its

summit. The landscape around me is the same as at mid-day, and the organ of vision is the same : but light, the medium through which the eye sees, is wanting ; and I look for the river, for the meadow, for the mansion, for the hill, for all the beauties of the scenery, in vain—I am presented with “an universal blank.” It is in vain that, as an intelligent creature, I am surrounded by the works of God, and am furnished with reasoning powers, with a capacity formed to contemplate, to examine, and to admire them, unless I am furnished also with some medium through which they may be seen. Revelation is that medium. Were the eye of reason quenched in the spirit, the mind would be in that state of incapacity to discern the invisible God, as is the man born blind to examine his works. And were the light of revelation extinguished, although the man were in full possession of his intellectual powers, he would resemble the person on the summit of the mountain at midnight, in vain attempting to explore the landscape : he would possess the *organ*, but be destitute of the *medium* ; he would have the *eye*, but not the *light*. And for this reason, the apostle represents the heathens, as “feeling after, if haply they might find God, although he was not far from every one of them :” as men involved in perfect darkness, although possessing the organ of vision, are compelled to *feel* for the object of their pursuit, even when that object is at their side, or before their face.

It will be readily acknowledged, that through the medium of revelation alone, we can form any conception of things which are "not seen as yet." We can know nothing, we can anticipate nothing of futurity, but as revealed religion removes the curtain and unveils a portion of invisible objects. But we will venture to assert, that the visible creation itself is not beheld to perfection, but through the medium of revelation. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work:" but the man, who has never received this divine medium, discerns not that glory. "Day unto day uttereth speech, night unto night sheweth knowledge:" "There is no speech, nor language, where their voice is not heard"—but he understands not their testimony. For this reason, many have beheld their beauties, and have heard their voice, who have not acknowledged the existence of God; and, from these alone, none have understood his perfections. And if revelation be necessary to the developement of creation, how much more is it necessary to unfold the mysteries of Providence! After all, but little is at present discovered. Our curiosity is repressed, and our impatience controlled, by the declaration, "what I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." Yet we are permitted, sometimes, through this medium, to comprehend a part of the scheme, that we may form some conception of the magnificence of the whole. God deciphers a little of his own mysterious handwriting, to prove

his perfect ability to construe the entire volume. He makes known a portion of his purposes, as a pledge, that he will hereafter fulfil his engagement to show the harmony, the propriety, and the wisdom of all.

USE OF SACRED HISTORY.

It is the glory and the beauty of sacred history to make us acquainted with *men*, and to disclose to us human feelings. No artificial strokes are used in the delineation of character in this volume. No romantic, unnatural circumstances, are recorded as belonging to the individual selected, to raise wonder and to lead captive the fancy: for where miraculous events *are* asserted, we trace the finger of God, and are no longer surprised, and they bear all the marks of matter of fact, for which some cause is assignable. No false gloss varnishes a depraved disposition. No unreal splendours dazzle and astonish us. All is natural; and feeling ourselves among our brethren in the flesh, correspondent emotions spring up within us, when we perceive them agitated by grief or joy; and we read our own hearts while the narrative permits us to look into theirs. Whether we are overwhelmed with the perplexities of kingdoms, or are occasionally called to the field of battle; whether we witness the slaughter of our fellow-men, or are involved in the intrigues and policies of worldly courts: or whether we enter the tranquil bosom of a family,

and share their domestic comforts and trials, and read in these hallowed pages the same scenes which pass before our eyes every day that we live ; we mark, with equal gratification and advantage, the developement of the plans of Providence, in relation both to public and domestic life ; and deduce from it some inferences applicable to the dealings of God, with us, as a nation, or as individuals. Who can read the scriptures without feeling that instruction and amusement are combined ? Pleasure and religious information intermingle, and are blended. The imagination is captivated, the heart is warmed, the judgment is enlightened, the spirit is refreshed and invigorated.

HORRORS OF WAR.

WHEN war is awakened, the judgments of God are abroad in the earth. Thus have we seen to-night a people distinguished for their religious privileges, for their prosperity, and for their separation from all other nations, devoted to destruction because of their transgressions. Let us learn, that whenever the sword is permitted to devour, it is to chastise the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity. War is horrible in its nature and in its effects. It separates the dearest and the closest connections of human nature. One battle renders thousands of wives, widows : thousands of children, fatherless : thousands of parents, childless : thousands of spirits ruined beyond redemption ! See, pressing into yonder slippery,

empurpled field, throngs of all ages, seeking their own among the dead! In this disfigured countenance the child discerns with difficulty the features of his father. In that mangled body dwelt the spirit which was the prop and the glory of yonder silvery head, now bowed down over it in silent, unspeakable sorrow. There the widow washes the wounds of her husband with her tears. And how few of that dreadful list of slaughtered men were fit to die! Surely war was let loose upon the world as a curse, in the just anger of God.

WRITERS OF THE SCRIPTURES,—WISE AND GOOD MEN.

Who will call in question the understanding or the accomplishments of Moses? Under what circumstances of honour has his name been transmitted through ages and generations, till, irradiated with all its pristine glory, it has reached even these latter days! To a mind far above the common standard—to talents the most illustrious, he added all the learning of the Egyptians. Born at the fountain head of literature, he drank copious draughts of the salutary stream. Before him the celebrated lawgivers of antiquity, although much later than this renowned legislator, shrink away, as the stars which shine through the night, fade before the first tints of the morning, and hide their diminished heads when the sun uncovers his radiance. In like manner all the writers of the Old

and New Testaments demand our respect as men of supereminent talents, and of solid wisdom. No one can read those psalms which are ascribed to the king of Israel, and imagine that David was a man of a *common* understanding. The fragments which have descended to us from Solomon, abundantly confirm the decision of the scriptures in naming him the wisest of men. He must be strangely destitute of taste, who can read, unmoved, the majestic and sublime productions of Isaiah. We disdain to answer the bold, unfounded, ignorant assertions of the author of "The Age of Reason," who says, that, "a school boy should be punished for producing a book so full of bombast and incongruity as the book called Isaiah." A man who can thus speak of a production so truly sublime, upon general, we might say universal consent, has forfeited all claim to criticism; and he must feel something like degradation who should sit down to answer so palpable a misrepresentation. We pass over the words of Jesus Christ, for surely it will be admitted that "never man spake as this man." Luke rises before us as claiming to rank high in respectability. His writings will appear to any unprejudiced mind impressed with the stamp of genius and of literature. In support of this position is it necessary to do more than appeal to the short and elegant preface to his gospel, after which, having once for all introduced himself, he disappears, and the historian is lost in the narrative? "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order

a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eye witnesses, and ministers of the word : It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee, in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed." The apostle Paul is a name too great to be passed over in silence. His defence before Agrippa is a master-piece of genuine eloquence and feeling ; and he who can deny it, after reading the sentence with which it closes, appears to us most unreasonably prejudiced, and irreclaimable by the force of evidence. "Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian. And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am—except these bonds !" His writings from first to last discover an extraordinary mind, and a fund of intelligence, worthy a disciple who sat at the feet of Gamaliel. Those who were unlettered men, have no less a claim upon our respectful attention. Who does not perceive a blaze of genius and of talent bursting through all the obscurity of their birth, and counteracting the original narrowness of their education ? They were *all* wise men ; and their wisdom carried with it the most decisive evidence that it was from above : it was "first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be

entreated, full of mercy and of good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy."

We have pronounced but a small part of their eulogium in saying that they were WISE men; for talents are often found united to vice: but they were also eminently GOOD men. They *were* men. We do not design to hold them up to your view as *perfect* characters: for such a representation would neither accord with truth, nor agree with their pretensions: but they were as perfect as humanity in its most exalted state upon earth seems capable of being. The charges against the character of David have been heavy, but they have been as ably refuted. The light which he enjoyed was small, compared with the meridian glory which illumines our walk through life. And he must have an hard heart, and a most unreasonable conscience, who can urge David's failings against him, with much severity, after the contrition which he felt and expressed. Considered in connection with the other, and excellent parts of his character, these defects resemble the dark spots, which, to a philosophic and scrutinizing eye, appear on the sun's disk; but which, to any unassisted organ of vision, are swallowed up in the blaze of his glory. In the writings and the lives of the apostles, what piety, what benevolence, what devotion, what love to God and to man, are visible! What genuine zeal did they manifest! A zeal distinguished from mere enthusiasm, both in its object, and in its tendency! No good man can read these writ-

ings, such is their holy fervour, and such their exalted piety, without being made both wiser and better! Do you not discern in them hearts weaned from the present world, and fired with the glorious prospects of futurity? Do you not perceive in all things an integrity which made them ardent in the support of their cause, and ready to suffer every extremity for it? Yet that integrity, and that ardour, mingled with humility, temperance, mildness, goodness, and truth? Do they not continually insist upon these things as the genuine effects, the necessary consequences, and the distinguishing characteristics, of their religion? O let any unprejudiced person calmly sit down to read their lives, where all their weaknesses appear, and where none of their faults are extenuated, and he must conclude that they were good men!

We might, without departing much from our plan, draw up by way of contrast the lives and actions of the principal adversaries of Revelation, and oppose them to those of its first asserters. We think that the confessions of Rousseau would look but ill when placed by the penitential tears of Peter, or the contrite sighs of David. The licentious life, and the gloomy death of Voltaire, would be a striking contrast to the labours, the patience, the perils, and above all, the triumphant expiring moments of Paul. We shall not, however, pursue this subject. These lives will be contrasted another day. But we will add—that before the patrons

of infidelity speak so bitterly of the failings of David, they should place by his life, the conduct of its most strenuous, and most distinguished advocates; and the comparison would reflect but little honour, and little credit, upon themselves.

THE SPIRIT IN WHICH THE BIBLE SHOULD BE READ.

CONSULT it divested so far as possible of prejudice, and with a sincere desire both to attain improvement and to search out the truth. The investigation which we recommend, lies equally between that inactivity which slumbers forever over things acknowledged, and that impetuous temerity which relying on its own powers disdains assistance, attempts a flight beyond the precincts of lawful subjects, and with licentious boldness pries into those "secret things which belong to God." Some float forever on the surface of admitted truths, fearful to rise above the level over which they have hovered from the first moment of consciousness. These resemble those birds which feed upon the insects dancing on the water, who never rise into the air, but always skim the surface of the lake, on the borders of which they received life. Others, on bold, adventurous wing, rise into the trackless regions of mystery, till they sink from the pride of their elevation, perplexed and exhausted. These, by aiming at too much, lose every thing. Because they have attempted unsuccessfully to in-

investigate that, which God has been pleased to put out of the reach of human comprehension, they will not believe any thing—they embrace a system of universal scepticism. So Noah's dove beheld on every side a boundless expansion of waters: and whether she rose or sunk, was equally bewildered, and found no rest for the sole of her foot. There is one point of difference, and that is, that she returned to the ark; but those whom we have described, too often are found to turn despisers, who wonder and perish. But the Christian is bold in investigating *all* that God has submitted to his researches, attempts every thing leaning on Almighty energy, and relies with implicit confidence upon the written word. So the eagle rises boldly into the air, keeping the sun in view, and builds her nest upon a rock.

We would not have you, with the inactive and supine, always coast the shore: nor with the infidel venture into the boundless ocean, without pilot, or compass, or ballast, or anchor: exposed equally to the quicksands, to the rocks, to the whirlpool, and to the tempest: but we are desirous that, like the Christian, you should boldly face, and patiently endure the storm, with the Bible as your compass, Hope as your anchor, God as your pilot, and Heaven as your country.

MAN A DEPENDENT CREATURE.

MAN is a needy, dependent creature, from his birth to his death. His first cry is the voice of want and helplessness; his last tear flows from the same source; and in no one intermediate period of his life, can he be pronounced independent. His eye, the moment it is opened, is turned upon another for assistance. His limbs must be sheltered from the cold: his nutriment provided, and his wants supplied by the care and exertions of others: or he would perish in the hour of his birth. A few months expand his limbs; and then a new train of wants succeeds. He must be watched with incessant vigilance, and guarded with unceasing care and anxiety, against a thousand diseases which wait to precipitate him to a premature grave. The quivering flame of an existence scarcely communicated, is exposed to sudden and furious blasts, and it requires all a parent's skill to interpose a screen which may prevent its extinction; and, alas! after all, such interpositions as human skill and tenderness can supply, are often ineffectual, and the prevailing blast extinguishes the sickly fire.

The child begins to think, and a new field of exertion is opened to the mother. He needs direction, and is dependent upon her wisdom and affection for his earliest sources of information. She watches and facilitates the dawn of reason. She teaches her child for what end he came into the world:

and in language adapted to his capacity, exhibits to the inquiring mind, and pours into the listening ear, his high and immortal destination. Oh, then with what anxiety she watches the speaking countenance ! With what skill she directs the passions ! With what assiduity she strives to eradicate, or at least to bring into subjection his visible propensity to evil, and the impulses of a depraved nature ! Who among us cannot look back to this early period, and remember a mother's short, impressive conversation—her entreaties—her caresses—her restrictions—and her tears ?

The boy advances in wisdom, and in stature, and in strength : but he is still dependent. And now he must pass into other hands. There are many things which it is necessary for him to know, and to learn, in order to his passage through life with respectability, which it is not a mother's province to teach him. Besides, it is needful that he should sojourn for a season with strangers, to prepare him for the approach of that time, when he must quit the paternal roof forever, and force his way through the wide world !

Grown up at length to manhood, he is still dependent. He lives by conferring and receiving mutual offices of kindness. It is not good for him to be alone. He links his fortunes and his interests, his hopes and his fears, his joys and his sorrows, with those of another. His duties and his responsibilities, multiply upon him. The circle is widened. He finds others dependent upon him,

while he is not himself independent. And all his difficulties and sufferings are lightened by being divided.

Behold him stretched upon the bed of death having reached the extremity of this transient existence, still a poor, dependent, needy creature ! To that heart he looks for sympathy : that bosom must support his languishing head : that hand must adjust the pillow, and administer the cordial, and wipe away the dew of death, and close the extinguished eye. Into the bosom of his companion through life, or of his child, or of his friend, he breathes the last sigh !

HUMAN POWER IS LIMITED.

THE productions of human skill are grand ; and we pronounce the “solemn temple” magnificent when contrasted with surrounding and inferior buildings : but when set in comparison with the temple of the sky, it is magnificent no longer—it shrinks into nothing. I see a picture of the evening : I admire the painter’s art in so judiciously blending his light and his shade : a soft and sober tint overspreads the whole piece, and I pronounce it beautiful ;—but when I compare it with the sunset of nature, when I see the west inflamed with ethereal fire, blushing with ten thousand vivid and various splendours, while the distant mist slowly creeps along the line of the horizon, and forms a contrast to the brilliancy above it, the ef-

fort of art is swallowed up in the sublimity of nature—and it is beautiful no longer. I admire the genius and the understanding of the philosopher; I reverence the superior intelligence of a Solomon; I look up humbled to a Newton, exploring the immensity of yonder firmament, reducing the apparent confusion of its orbs to order, laying the planetary system under laws, tracing their orbits, and scrutinizing their nature—and I pronounce these wise men: but I raise my eyes—and behold an higher order of creatures around the throne of God, before whom even Newton is a child; and presuming into “the heavens of heavens,” I am lost in HIM, who charges even these superior beings “with folly.”

The powers of the human mind are said to be large and capacious: they are so when compared with those of every other terrestrial being in the creation of God. Man walks abroad the monarch of this world. Of all the diversified tribes which the hand of Deity formed, into man alone was “breathed the breath of life, and he became a living soul.” The animal soon reaches his narrow standard, and never passes it. The powers of man are in a constant state of progression; and probably in the world of spirits they will be found to be illimitable. But whatever they may be in their nature, they are at present contracted in their operations. To what do they amount when called into action? To speak a few languages: to decipher a few more in a various character: to ascer-

tain here and there a cause by tracing it upwards from its effects: to number seven planets revolving round the sun: to send imagination into infinite space in search of other systems, till she is bewildered and tired in her progress: to float on the bosom of the air suspended from a globe of silk; or to sail over the surface of the ocean in a vessel of his own construction: to ascend the hoary summit of the loftiest mountain, or to penetrate a fathom or two the surface of the earth: these are the boundaries of human effort. And in searching out the little he is capable of learning, what difficulties he must meet! what embarrassments he must surmount! what labours he must undergo! what time he must expend! And after all, how little has he gained! how much remains unexplored! how uncertain, and probably how erroneous, are his best grounded conclusions! And if we elevate our thoughts to those spirits, whose powers in our limited apprehension are unbounded, we shall find upon inquiry that they also are limited creatures. There are subjects present to the Divine Mind which the angels do not know: mysteries, which the capacity of Gabriel cannot fathom, and which the intelligence of a seraph cannot unravel. How much less “man who is a worm, and the son of man who is but a worm?”

MIRACLES.**EXERTION NECESSARY TO ATTAINMENT.**

To attain any object of importance, we must be satisfied to take many weary intermediate steps. To reach any point of eminence, confessedly requires patient industry, and persevering labour. He that will be a scholar, must begin with the easiest principles of language, and gradually ascend to the summit of literature. He that will be a philosopher, must commence with the simple elements of science, and by painful researches explore the worlds of nature and of reason. By many privations, and in the face of many difficulties, the hero advances from "conquering to conquer," till empire after empire is subjugated, and from his hand nations receive their respective destinies. But what, if the scholar had sat down contented with the elements of knowledge? what, if the philosopher had never passed over first principles? what if the hero had been impeded by the first river, or halted at the foot of the first mountain, that crossed his course? or had turned his back and fled at the sound of the first trumpet calling him to battle? or had abandoned the project which his daring mind conceived, upon the first disappointment of his hopes? Where had been the pride of literature, the distinctions of science, and the glory of victory? We should have justly added scorn and reproach to the mortification of failure and defeat—

and have said—He who will tread the paths of literature and of philosophy, must learn patiently to labour, and perseveringly to advance; and he who claims the warrior's wreath of fame, must as a good soldier, endure hardness, as a skilful leader, meet and bear up against calamity, and as a veteran, sustain with unbending fortitude, and with a mind undismayed, the shock of battle, and even the disasters of defeat.

On what principle is it, that these reasonings, so universally admitted, and which are deemed, on every other point, so self-evident, should be considered in most cases, doubtful, and in some, should be absolutely denied in reference to religion? In securing a worldly interest all the powers of the mind combine with the exertions of the body; and no man expects either distinction or affluence, without toil, and diligence, and decision, and perseverance. The slothful, the inconstant, the presumptuous, if they fail of their object, meet derision instead of pity. We say of the first, "It is the hand of the diligent that maketh rich;" of the second, "Unstable as water, he could not excel;" of the last, he should have "sat down" to "count the cost" before he began to "build." It is to religion alone that we refuse to apply these acknowledged principles, as a standard of character, or as a directory for our conduct. In religion alone a man expects to be master of the mysteries of redemption, and of providence, while he is professedly but a disciple; in religion alone he looks to be crown-

ed as a conqueror, before he was well girded on his armour as a soldier. It is common in worldly affairs to reproach a man, even for calamities which are unavoidable ; in religion to throw that blame upon the interest, which is indeed due to ourselves. So oppositely do men judge respecting points, which however distinct in their nature, are allied as to the measures by which they are to be secured, and the duties which are respectively involved in them. To sum up, in one word, these observations, God has, in religion, as in every other case, connected the means with the end ; nor can the first be separated from the last, without the whole being lost. He also expects from us, not only the diligence and perseverance necessary to the security of any worldly interest ; but a diligence and perseverance commensurate with the greatness and superiority of the object which we propose to ourselves—and this is a reasonable expectation.

MAN'S CONSCIOUSNESS OF IMMORTALITY.

MAN has a spirit within him conscious of immortality, and always instituting inquiries after its high destination. In creation he has no counterpart ; in the universe he can find no creature so glorious as himself ; so exalted in the scale of being ; so elevated in the sphere of natural life ; so like the invisible Creator. He feels his dignity every step which he takes ; and contemplates the

starry heavens as yielding in splendour, in value, in importance, to the inestimable gem lodged in his bosom. In certain qualities, many things have the preeminence, but, as a whole, he is "more excellent than they." He yields to the animal creation, in strength and swiftness; to the flower of the field, in beauty and variety: to the sun and stars, in lustre, and in present duration; but these are all his inferiors. The animal returns to the dust to perish, buries his powers and existence in the earth, and ceases to be. The flower is formed for a season, withers in its season, and participates not the reproduction of the next spring. The flower which rises from the same root is another flower, and in many respects differs from the preceding one. The sun will spend his lustre, and the hand that feeds his light, shall be withdrawn from him. But man, as a spirit, never dies; and even his body shares the honour conferred upon him. The dishonours of death are transient; the morning of the resurrection will rise upon the grave; the voice of God will rend the sepulchre: a tide of light and of life, will pour in upon its dreary confines; the body shall be raised and reanimated; and death shall have no more dominion over it.

LAUDABLE CURIOSITY.

THERE is a disposition in the human mind, to investigate subjects on which it is not possible to attain certainty : and which excite the strong and awful feeling of sublimity. When reason confesses her inability to pursue the train of reflection upon which she enters, imagination loves to soar beyond the point where reason closes her pinions, and to bewilder herself in a mazy flight through the boundless regions of infinity. For this cause the mind delights to expatiate in the starry heavens ; the fancy to wander beyond the confines of creation ; and formed under her plastic hand, new worlds, new suns, new systems, “ arise and shine.” The same principle makes us love to dwell upon the mysteries of Providence ; to attempt to explore hidden causes from obvious effects ; and to anticipate what shall be from that which has already taken place. The same feeling summons the secrets of futurity to pass before us : we love to speculate upon that which we must die to learn ; and are never weary of sending imagination to create visions of that unseen state of being.

Yet is futurity, under the sanctions of revelation, not a subject of mere speculation, but of laudable inquiry, of solemn hope, of awful fear, of lively faith. Who can feel himself a traveller through this wide solitude, a stranger and pilgrim upon the earth, about to press into the hidden and unseen state of existence whither his forefathers

have entered, without inquiring into the particulars of that country, whence “no traveller returns?” He who is about to leave his native land forever, and to pass the remainder of his days in some foreign clime, is anxious to learn every particular respecting his future residence. It is a consolation to him to reflect that the same sun which rises upon his country will visit him when he is banished from her shores. But we must exchange worlds. The state to which we hasten has not the same sun, the same stars, the same light, the same nature. All is changed ; all is new. Is it idle curiosity that prompts the anxious, eager inquiry after its features, before we become its inhabitants? No—it is a reasonable investigation. Let us not lightly cast from us a volume from whose pages alone we draw any certain information as to this awful, pleasing state of being. We may not be able to demonstrate all its positions, but the heart refuses to resign its hope. We exult in the prospects which it discloses—and bow to its testimony, even where it seems to run counter to general experience ; remembering that while it is impossible with man, with “God all things are possible.”

THE APOSTLES OF CHRIST.

THE annals of time will not afford us such another list of characters. In vain we search the chronicles of empires—they are barren of every

thing so illustrious. In vain we penetrate the bosom of courts—they present not any thing so dignified. In vain we walk through camps filled with heroes, and over fields which they have won—we meet with no minds so extraordinary—and with no achievements to be compared with the deeds of these champions of eternal truth—written on this neglected record. We encounter, indeed, men rising into distinction for science—becoming eminent for talents—moving high in the sphere of society—possessing power to disturb the repose of mankind—to destroy the liberties and the happiness of nations—to break up the boundaries of empires, and to remove their ancient land-marks:—we see them availing themselves of this power to the utmost—but covered with all the glory reflected from a thousand fields contested and obtained—they are eclipsed by the divine radiance of one of the least of these. The page of history may produce a Nimrod, an Alexander, a Hannibal, a Cæsar : the page of inspiration displays an Abraham, a Moses, a Samuel, a David. Plunder six thousand years of their treasures—lay in the balances all that has been found great and glorious and god-like in the human character, from the commencement of time to this hour—and one witness of the miracles—Jesus their author—outweighs the whole.

The greatness of the Apostles is founded upon their worth. Their magnificence is not built upon the ruins of desolated humanity. Their laurels

were not raised in the field of blood, nor nourished by the widow's tears. They were not celebrated for their contempt of the common feelings of nature, but for the perfection to which they cultivated them. Their course was not marked like that of the hurricane, by the vestiges of destruction: but distinguished like the track which the shower of the spring pursues, by the blessings distributed on every side as it passes. The face of nature was not withered in their presence, but brightened by the sun beam of their eye. Peace fled not their approach, but lived in their smile, and waited on their footsteps. It was piety which rendered them illustrious, and religion which exalted them above the sphere of humanity.

Neither was their dignity obtrusive. They did not court renown, nor sacrifice principle to applause. They did not ask the votes of mankind by stooping to their prejudices: nor buy their favour by the brilliancy of their exploits. They sought a quiet, and often trod a humble walk through life. They shone, so to speak, in defiance of themselves, in the eyes of admiring angels, stars of the first magnitude in the constellation of religion, but unseen, or unheeded, by those who gazed only on the hemisphere of time. They were lent to the last but for a season—and are set in this world. They shine in the first with additional splendour, and shall continue so to do, in the firmament of heaven, upon which they have long since risen,—forever!

IMPORTANCE OF RELIGIOUS SENTIMENT.

WE all receive the system of Copernicus in astronomy, in preference to that of Ptolemy, by which the ancients were determined in their observations: because, upon such evidences as the nature of the subject will allow, and by a comparison of the appearances and the motions of the heavenly bodies with the laws which the commonly received system involves in it, we feel assured that it agrees with matter of fact. But suppose the Copernican system had never been discovered, and the Ptolemaic had never been exploded, no serious consequences could have arisen from this: we should indeed have been unable so fully to account for certain appearances, but still the sun would have shown upon us, and the seasons would have revisited us in their order, whether we could accurately and philosophically have accounted for these things or not: whether we supposed the sun to be the centre of the system as now, or continued to believe with our fathers, that with inconceivable rapidity he whirled his dazzling orb round the comparatively little sphere inhabited by man. It is far otherwise in morals. A mistake here is of incalculable mischief, as it produces the most fatal consequences in this world, and is irreparable in another. Not merely the joys and the sorrows of the individual will depend continually upon his moral principles; but the whole cast and colour of

society, in its various and extended combinations, will be taken from the religious system under which it is moulded, and to which it appeals, at once as the test of its character, and as the directory of its conduct. Those who affect to think that it is of small importance to what religious system a man gives his assent, and in what way he worships God, so that he worship him at all—that all incense is alike before the Deity, whether presented

“By saint, by savage, or by sage ;”

and to whomsoever presented

“Jehovah, Jove, or Lord :”

forget that human actions are determined by motives ; and that our very motives are themselves controlled by our religious convictions : in short, that where religion is any thing more than profession, where it is principle at all, it is a principle all-powerful, under all circumstances influential, and that it acts with a force alike inconceivable, and uncontrollable.

BENEVOLENCE OF CHRISTIANITY.

THE character of the whole Christian system is a character of benevolence. In the life of its author, in the labours of his apostles, in the nature of his precepts, in the spirit of his religion—there is but one principle running through the whole—

benevolence. It is one of the most delightful representations of the Divine character, and it is peculiar to revealed religion, that God is disposed to comfort and to encourage those whom man despises and abandons. In the refined speculations of philosophy, magnificent attributes encircled the God of Nature, where reason could be prevailed upon to purify itself in some degree from the grossness of a corrupt imagination, yet in those rare instances, the perfections conceived were interwoven with terrors that chastened love: but when the gospel declared him as he really is, he was manifested clothed in tenderness that corrects and subdues fear. The God of man's conception was attracted by the external circumstances of pomp and talent: he was partial in his regards, both of persons and of places; he was the God of the hero, of the noble, of the philosopher—the God of nature and of revelation sends his rain alike “upon the evil and upon the good—causes his sun to shine upon the just, and upon the unjust”—distributes with true paternal feeling and affection equal smiles upon every country, and people, and rank,—upon the poor and the rich—upon the learned and the illiterate—upon the European and the African—and he “is no respecter of persons.” In examining the testimony of this volume, we see throughout, (and experience confirms the fact asserted in the Bible,) that if a preference is shown at all, it is favourable to those who are of little value in human estimation. If there be one ray brighter than

another from the same sun, it falls upon the cottage rather than upon the palace. Thus a counterbalance to affliction is afforded the wounded mind. He who

“ Rides on a cloud disdainful by
A sultan or a czar,
Laughs at the worms that rise so high,
Or frowns them from afar ;”

sees some of the children of disease and poverty *suffering* his will, who could not by active service *perform* it, and looks approbation that finds its way to their heart. He calls the friendless being, from whom the world avert their eyes with disgust or with scorn—his friend, his brother, his child. “Thus saith the High and Lofty One who inhabiteth eternity ; I dwell in the high and holy place—with him also who is of a broken spirit, and who trembleth at my word.” Such are the declarations of revelation, and they are sanctioned by Providence. Were it not going too far from the subject, several reasons might be assigned for the advantage of the poor over the rich. The great often enjoy less of the divine notice than the lowly, because it is the tendency of their situation to allure their desires from that direction : “they *will* not come unto him that they might have life”—he also abases the proud, while he elevates the humble, that “no flesh should glory in his presence”—he measures his distributions according to the necessities of every man : and if he particularly directs his attention

his kindness, and his care to the poor, it is because they *need* it more. But waving this, as it is not our immediate object to vindicate “eternal providence, and justify the ways of God to man,” it is evident not merely that a benevolent attention is paid to every class of human life—most to those who need it most—but that the leading, the peculiar, the constant feature of Christianity, is benevolence.

MIRACLES OF CHRIST

THEY had all a tendency to alleviate human affliction, and to diminish those calamities which imbitter or shorten life. Hunger devours the man, and is one of the most frightful evils attendant upon poverty. But he who refused to work a miracle to feed himself, when he saw that the multitude had nothing to eat, and that they fainted, had compassion on them, and supplied them. He who yearly multiplies the grain, by an act of the same power multiplied five loaves and two fishes to satisfy five thousand. Worse than even hunger is it to have disease in the frame. And how multifarious are the miseries of human life! Yonder stands one, waiting for a hand to guide him. The eye is extinguished; and while day smiles on the face of nature, night gathers forever round his head. There is another, whose ear never drank in a stream of melody—the organ is closed against strains which steal through that avenue into the

heart of his neighbour—he “never heard the sweet music of speech”—nor perceives the tones of his own unformed, untuned, unmodulated voice. Here is a third, who appears before me, without the power of utterance—the string of the tongue was never loosed, and he never spake: the organs of speech are deranged, or were never perfectly formed—he hears tones which vibrate on his heart—but he cannot impart through the same medium the same pleasurable sensation. These could not escape the compassionate eye of Jesus. He gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the dumb, limbs to the maimed, health to the sick, strength to decrepitude. But yonder is the chamber of death. Darker is the cloud that broods there. Where the tongue was silent the eye was eloquent: when the palsied limb refused to move—the ear heard and discriminated sounds which melt the passions, and stir the spirit within us: it was sad to tend the couch of sickness,—but still we seemed to have some hold upon the sufferer, and he to have some interest in life. But that is the bed of mortality, and the young, the beautiful, the only hope of her family is stretched there—and there is Jesus also—rousing her from death as from a gentle slumber, and restoring her to the arms of her parents. There is yet one other class of suffering worse than death. It glares in the eye, it raves in the voice, it struggles in the limbs of that man, whose throne of reason, imagination has usurped, and over the whole empire of his

mind, madness reigns in all its accumulated horrors. Visions—horrible visions—of unreal and inconceivable objects float before his disordered senses while he hears not, he distinguishes not, he regards not, the voice of parent, or of wife, or of child, or of friend. The spirit sits surrounded by the ruins of nature ; terrified amidst shattered, and useless, or perverted organs ; and covered with the midnight of despair. Oh, let the compassionate eye of the Saviour fix upon this object!—and it does—he meets him coming from among the tombs—he speaks the word—he calms the tempest—behold “the man sitting at his feet, clothed, and in his right mind.” He gave “reason and understanding to the distracted ; and release from the power of Satan, to those who were possessed by him.”

CHARACTER OF MOSES:

It is impossible to contemplate the character of Moses, in any point of view, without being struck with its singular greatness. We are surprised to see the little, deserted child, who floated in a bulrush ark, the sport of winds and waves, starting up a lawgiver, a hero, a general, a monarch ; and evincing in every sphere of operation, in every period of life, in every rank of society, an evident superiority, not merely over his contemporaries, but also over his predecessors, and the generations which have followed him. But of all his distinctions, that which the apostle seized is the most

conspicuous : of all his achievements it is the most noble ; of all his conquests it is the most brilliant. It was, at one and the same time, a victory over the world, a victory over sin, and a victory over himself. “By faith, Moses, when he was come to years refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter ; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king : for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible.”

What did he relinquish ? Honour, reputation, distinction, a crown ? The objects which dazzle the eyes, which captivate the affections, which subdue the heart, which inflame the desires of others, he voluntarily resigned. He gave up, of his own accord, from a noble contempt of its worthlessness, that, for which the hero dyes his hands in blood, hardens his heart against the tears of humanity and the pleadings of nature, violates the rights of nations, destroys the liberties of mankind, and for the attainment of which Europe is now desolated, and thousands are laid asleep in the dust, from time to time—the dust which was first impurpled with their vital fluid. Moses aimed at a nobler conquest, and won a greater field than that of Austerlitz or Calabria, when he subdued ambition, renounced the court of Pharaoh, and relinquished his claim on Egypt’s well-watered kingdom !

What did he embrace ? A life of danger ; a sphere of humiliation ; a track of ignominy. He

did not withdraw to spend his days in ease, and in elegant retirement. He neither shrunk from the painful duties of life, nor expected exemption from its troubles. On the contrary, he walked along its most thorny path. He chose a portion which necessarily involved in it affliction. And he did it upon the conviction of his judgment, and the decisions of his heart. Had he been expressly called to it, we might have wondered less: but it was his choice; and he obeyed in the voice of God, the impulse of his own great mind.

O how I envy him his feelings! How sweet were the hours of his retirement, of his reflections, of his repose! He did not meet, like Brutus, an apparition in his tent, raised by the accusations of conscience, to reproach him with a deed, which he had flattered himself would cover him with immortal glory. He did not, in casting the die, and taking his final resolution, decree, like Cæsar, the ruin of his country's liberties. He did not, like Alexander, first subdue the world, and then weep that he had not another world to conquer. These all had something to tarnish their glory—something to disturb their repose: and they felt how vain, and how unsatisfactory is human greatness. *They* often repented of *their* choice: but he, never!

And this greatness is attainable! All have not a crown to resign: but every man has passions to conquer. All cannot reach the summit of a hero's fame: but all may choose the lot of Moses. They

may be destitute of his talents, of his literature, of his rank ; but they may adopt his decision ; and in this he was most eminent, and most glorious. Here is a guiltless field, for the noblest ambition ! And here is a lesson for the proudest heart ! Behold the eulogy of the greatest man that ever lived ! And in what is it founded ? Not on his distinction as a legislator—his skill as a general—his elevation as a monarch—his attainments as a scholar—nor even his superiority as a prophet—these are all waved—Upon this alone his character rests—he *chose* “ rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.” “ Go, and do likewise.”

CONSISTENCY OF THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.

TRUTH is always consistent with itself: falsehood is frequently detected merely from its want of congruity. He that contents himself with simply detailing facts as they arise, need fear no scrutiny ; every examination of his narrative will only serve to render more evident its consistency. He that has a tale to palm upon mankind, to which truth refuses to set her seal, has reason to shrink from investigation. In vain it affects the air of sincerity—in vain it borrows the ornament of eloquence—in vain it is guarded with the vigilance of art—it wants the harmony and agreement absolutely essential to truth, and stands at last detected and exposed. If these observations are just

on general subjects, they will apply with peculiar force to the facts of revelation, and appear no less important as a test of its doctrines. A system that does not harmonize with itself cannot be true—because truth is necessarily consistent. A system that does indeed correspond in all its several parts, has something more than presumptive evidence to its veracity; for the same reason it bears in its face the grand and characteristic features of truth. To no volume can this evidence be so satisfactorily applied as to the Bible; both as a narrative of facts, and as a system of doctrines; nor less to the general scheme of salvation revealed in it, “and most surely believed” among us. There are “many things” contained therein “hard to be understood,” but there is nothing contradictory. There may be some things which we know not how to reconcile: but its invariable consistency, in every case to which evidence can be applied, ought in justice to induce us to conclude, that the defect is neither in the system, nor in its testimony, but that it lies partly in the inferiority of our powers of judging, and partly in the very contracted and partial views which we necessarily have of its plans and subjects. In the mean while the genuine exercise of reason appears to be, to allow Revelation, what must be allowed to all science, the grant of its own principles: and then to judge of its veracity, or the contrary, by the agreement or disagreement of its parts with each other; and the consequent harmony or discrepancy of the whole.

At the same time, when we are comparing the several parts of this great scheme together, in order to determine how far their union gives stability to the whole, we ought never to forget that we see *but* parts. All criticism upon an unfinished building, by persons who are acquainted with the design of the architect only by so much of it as the work of his hand has rendered apparent, must be deemed defective and premature. All that can be decided is the agreement or disagreement of those parts, which are already visible, with each other; and even in this hasty conclusion there is danger of rashness and injustice; since that which strikes the eye as out of proportion, perhaps wants only some corresponding part of the plan, not yet developed, to restore and to impress upon our senses the unity of the whole. So we ought to regard the designs of Providence. It is a magnificent, but as yet an unfinished plan. Every day demonstrates something of its beauty and consistence; but, alas! a very few strokes are added during our continuance here—so soon do we die out of the world! Such also is our situation in respect of the great and benevolent scheme of human redemption. We are struck and amazed at the portion of it which we are able to comprehend; but the half has not been told us; and we are unable to grasp that which is already revealed. Neither is the design as yet completed. All that is submitted to us, we see “as through a glass darkly,” and how much is yet behind! There are “heights and

depths, breadths and lengths" which surpass our knowledge, to be unfolded in a future world. We are justified in advancing the same plea relative to the facts of Revelation. Time has destroyed some of their local evidences. The historical records of the Bible are transmitted to us with a conciseness which was perfectly intelligible to contemporaries, but which overshadows them with a partial obscurity to us, who stand so remote from the scene of action, and from the ages in which they transpired. In the mean while, they exhibit the simple, firm, and eternal characters of truth.

It becomes those who examine pages which profess to be inspired, to do it with caution, with diligence, and with reverence. Then, when the claims of the Bible are disproved, let it be treated with levity: but until its pretensions are demonstrated to be false, until its long contested and unshaken evidences are destroyed, until the professed spirit of truth pervading it is proved to be a delusion and a fable, ridicule is not the weapon which candour would raise against such a cause, nor is mockery and insult consistent with common decency, when advanced against a system which has commanded the veneration of ages. If modern sceptics were capable of feeling shame, they would blush at the levity with which they treat the most solemn of all subjects; and at the disgusting flippancy with which they assail a cause, dignified in itself, gracious in its effects, and at whose foot the greatest of men, in every period of time, in ev-

ery department of literature, and in every country, have been content to lay their most distinguished honours.

OBSCURITY NO ARGUMENT AGAINST REVELATION.

It is singular that men should seize a circumstance, as an argument against Revelation, which constitutes an irresistible evidence in its favour, whether we consider it as a necessary result of the nature of things, or as a striking analogy with the works of creation, and the dispensations of Providence. The circumstance to which we allude is that obscurity which sometimes rests upon its pages, not arising from inaccuracy of expression, but from the very character of the subjects produced. It is not that the doctrine escaping our researches is uncertainly stated as a fact, but that the modes of its existence are altogether undefined. It is not that the testimony to the fact, whatever it be, is incomplete as evidence ; but that it is an evidence peculiar to the subject, resting simply upon the authority of inspiration, the doctrine itself being exclusively a doctrine of revelation ; and consequently possessing, in human estimation, a force and weight of authority corresponding with the admission of the claims of the Bible, on the part of the individual.

It is absurd to object against the scriptures that they contain many things incomprehensible to us,

when it cannot be denied that the plans and the operations of an infinite mind are necessarily beyond the grasp of one that is finite. Whatever human wisdom has been able of itself to discover, or to establish, has been intelligible to many, if not to all men; because finite powers are able to apprehend things that are finite. In limited faculties there may be still unbounded variety. All men have not equal minds. A Newton was capable of comprehending subjects utterly unintelligible to men of inferior capacities; and it is probable that angels are able to understand much more of the operations of God, both in nature, in providence, and in redemption, than the most exalted and the wisest of human beings. But no man ever wrote upon so abstruse a subject, if he did himself apprehend it, but another man was found capable of understanding and appreciating his reasoning. And no man ever invented a system, but another was found able, not merely to grasp it, but to improve upon it. But in reference to the plans of God, there is a certain point to which we can ascend, and no man has been able to go beyond it. Whatever is here explained, is intelligible to the "wayfaring man;" and whatever is left unrevealed, is inscrutable to the philosopher. The obscurity of revelation arises from the grandeur of its subjects, from the sublimity of its system: not from any deficiency of evidence to its facts, nor from anything indefinite in its language. It is the same difficulty pressing upon the inquirer after its subjects, which

the astronomer feels in tracing the operations of the same God in nature. Notwithstanding all the efforts of science, it is still disputed whether the orb which forms the centre of our system, be a body of fire, or an habitable world. No wonder that the comet's eccentric orbit should be undefined ; and that the visits of these beautiful strangers should fill us with admiration, without adding much to the stores of our knowledge, relative to the laws by which they are governed, and the purposes for which they are sent into our system. All that we learn certainly is, that there is a sun—that we depend upon him for light and heat—that we are supplied according to our necessities—and that “the hand which made him is divine.” So of the doctrines of revelation—they are clearly stated as facts—the modes of their existence are concealed—and for this plain reason—they could not be made known to us, unless it were possible for a finite mind to grasp infinity. That the volume professedly inspired should, in its subjects, transcend our knowledge, is an evidence in favour of its claims ; since that which originated with man might have been easily apprehended ; but that which emanates from God, must, for the reasons just assigned, be necessarily unsearchable.

ADVERSITY A TEST OF CHARACTER.

WHEN iniquity abounds the love of many waxes cold. Seasons of trial distinguish the faithful from the false. The tempests which have, at different periods, shaken the church of God, have always eventually promoted its stability. Sufferings may diminish the number of nominal christians; but it unites more closely the little band of real disciples. It severs the precious from the vile. It discriminates characters. It exposes principles, and brings to light hidden motives. It melts down animosities among the brethren, and cements those who ought to "dwell together in unity." While Jesus was with his disciples, and they foresaw not impending evil, we often find them alienated, and contending for pre-eminence; but when their Master was "taken from their head," when Israel's hopes lay buried, as they imagined, in that new tomb, hewn out of a rock, on the side of Calvary, we see them assembled in one room; a sense of danger and of desertion drew brother to brother, and friend to friend; they felt that they had a common interest; and they resolved to live and die together. "Sweet are the uses of adversity!" While affliction cements the church of Christ, it imparts lustre to the character of the individual. Trial gives a polish to human nature. It controls the passions; it softens the heart; it subdues pride; it generates sympathy. He who has frequented the school of adversity, has been taught this important lesson—

to "put on bowels of compassion, and tender mercies." He who cannot feel for another's woe, never himself endured, or never profited by the stroke of calamity. Nor is sorrow, sanctified sorrow, less beneficial to personal religion. It quickens devotion, it produces resignation, it awakens caution, it stimulates serious self-examination. As the light of prosperity expires, every christian grace shines more brightly; and when the day departs, what brilliant stars kindle their immortal radiance in this darkened hemisphere. The cause of general religion is aided by affliction. Does it disperse the fickle multitude? It renders more conspicuous the faithful few. A city set upon a hill which cannot be hid is the little society that dares to adhere to the Redeemer in the evil day, and amidst the falling off of professors. An individual who stands fast in a time of apostasy, is in himself a tower of strength to the cause: he attracts more observers even by his singularity; and he commands their admiration, in defiance of themselves.

THE FIRST TRIUMPHS OF DEATH.

WE have seen Death in so many shapes, have felt his witness within us by so many infallible proofs of sickness and decay, that if he is a fearful, he is not a novel enemy. We have stood around the dying beds of our dearest connections: we have uncovered the sepulchre to deposit in its dark

chambers our own flesh ; we have died again and again in our family—death has assailed us in a thousand forms—has wrung tears from our eyes, and sorrow from our hearts, at every period of our lives, and every stage of our journey—and yet has he not lost his terrors ! We still watch his approach with anxiety—we listen to the silent celerity of his footsteps with fear. When he robs us afresh, we feel the blow as poignantly as though we had never felt it before ; when he rushes to seize us, we receive him as though he were a stranger. What then must he have been to the first men ? They had not, like us, traced his horrible features : they had not, like us, watched his destructive progress : they had not, like us, witnessed his frequent visits. If you take the trouble to calculate, you will find that notwithstanding so many names, and, as it appears, generations, preceded Enoch, there is no recorded death, excepting Abel and Adam : such was human longevity ! The world had no opportunity to watch the action of death in the first instance ; for it was violent, unnatural, and performed by a brother's hand, the murderer alone being present. I can easily conceive, therefore, with what anxiety they would watch the footsteps of time in the person of Adam, the venerable father of the human race ; who, being the first in the transgression, was, perhaps, also the first who tasted of death in all its natural bitterness. O what an interest every sickness would excite ! What anxiety every pang would cause ! Every fresh line

in his countenance would be marked. As he grew enfeebled by age, their attention would redouble: and when, at last, the long expected blow was struck, what a group of astonished, affrighted countenances were assembled! The last sigh—the last look—the last tear—the last word—the last breath—all left upon the heart an impression which time could not obliterate!

THE EXAMPLE OF ANCIENT SAINTS.

WHEN the ancient saints pass before our eyes, clothed in the beauty of holiness, and encompassed with the transcendent glories of religion, we are dazzled with their splendour, and are almost induced to conclude that their characters display something more than human. We venerate the piety which preserved Noah and his family in the universal desolation of the flood; and which delivered Lot from amidst the ruins of the cities of the plain. We admire the faith of Abraham, who, when he was called to forsake his country and his father's house, went forth, not knowing whither he went; and when he was commanded to sacrifice his only son, laid him without murmuring upon the altar of God, relying with implicit confidence on the divine rectitude, and listening to the voice of duty, even when it opposed the pleadings of nature. We envy Elijah his fidelity, and David his piety: and in all these distinguished characters

we find something to excite respect, mingled with humility. But when we inspect their lives more closely, we perceive their frailties, and discover that these all were men of "like passions with ourselves." Noah, in the ark, and in the vineyard; Lot, in Sodom, and in the solitude of the mountain; Abraham, on Mount Moriah, and in Egypt; David in the cave, and in the palace—a shepherd and a prince; Elijah, "bold for the Lord of Hosts," in the city, and timidly, impatiently desiring to die in the wilderness; appear different beings. They fail also in their grand characteristics—Noah in his temperance; Lot in his purity; Abraham in his faith; David in his tenderness of conscience; and Elijah in his courage. They required the refreshment of religious privileges; and availed themselves of the appointed means of grace to keep alive their duties, and to give stability to their character. The ordinances which were thus manifestly useful and necessary to them, must be deemed essential and indispensable to us. If they could not live without prayer, neither can we. If they felt the necessity of self-examination, should not we say, "Search us, O God, and know our hearts; try us, and know our thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in us, and lead us in the way everlasting!" If their graces languished, can we wonder that ours fade? If the cloud of affliction dropped its tears upon them, shall we expect to pass along without finding its shadow stretched sometimes over our path? If they could not live

without the friendly aid of religion ; nor dispense with the public institutions of worship, and the exercises of private devotion ; nor die without the divine presence ; these things are both profitable and needful to us. If their strength required to be constantly thus renewed, let us place no confidence in mere mortal energy : let us not turn our feet from the house of God : let us neither despise his ordinances, nor violate the sanctity of his day ; let us receive with humility and with gratitude all the means of religious instruction.

MARRIAGE.

SUCH an union, arises out of the necessity of human nature, and is essential to its happiness. It originated in the appointment of God—it received the sanction of his law—it has been honoured and exalted in the New Testament—and it is sealed alike by religion, nature, and reason. It is an institution which gives two parties a common interest, and thus cements an union closer than any worldly friendship, while it builds it upon a basis not to be shaken or destroyed. The sorrows of life are lightened by becoming divided ; and its pleasures are multiplied by participation. It gives an impulse to a combination of talents, of zeal, of exertion—and modifies and tempers the asperities of human life. It gives to duty the irresistible force of affection, and the present recom-

pense of enjoyment. Where it is sanctified by the influence of religion, solitary devotion becomes social; united prayers and praises ascend to the throne of mercy; and they are mutual helpers of each other's faith and holiness. This institution received the sanction of the presence of Jesus, as a seal to its obligations. This fact points out the only way in which we have a right to expect happiness and prosperity in the connection—to make God a party in the rite, and to invite Jesus as a guest, not merely in the nuptial rejoicings, but also in all the domestic arrangements, and through all the scenes of human life. It was reserved to the profligacy and immorality of these last days, to pour contempt upon an institution divinely appointed, so repeatedly honoured under every religious dispensation, and so highly distinguished. It is one of the effects of that scepticism, or rather let me call it infidelity, which strikes at all order, and aims to destroy the very existence of society, by trampling upon the laws of Christianity, and by renouncing its authority. The results of such principles have been too fatally developed, especially of late, in the higher classes of society, by the infringement of the rights of this wise and holy institution; by a violation of its duties; by outrage upon its feelings; by an invasion of its sanctity, and by a wanton destruction of its domestic happiness. Our public journals are stained and polluted with narratives, but too frequent, of the dishonour endured on the one side, and the indig-

nity offered on the other, of the respective parties, and the sweet tranquillity of social order is abolished to make way for the indulgence of the most criminal passions. Families are divided and scattered; divorces succeed debauchery; children are early initiated into the mysteries of vicious refinement; and the morals of a generation to come are already tainted and debilitated, if not totally ruined. It arises from the diffusion of the pernicious principles of scepticism, and not from the pure code of revelation, which has imparted unfading glory to this institution. Out of modern philosophy, (as it has dared to call itself,) has arisen this hardness of the human heart, this contempt of social feeling, this irregularity and impurity of conduct. "Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning, made them male and female; and said, 'for this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What, therefore, God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.'"

RELATIVE DUTIES.

OUT of every relation of life, whether it be natural or spiritual, correspondent duties arise. Every step that we take in life, they increase and multiply. He that extends his influence, enlarges his circle, and widens his sphere, augments his obli-

gations in the same proportion. Nature constituted him a son, and imposed upon him filial duties. Inclination moulded him into a friend; and out of his affections sprang the obligations of friendship. He becomes, in process of time, a husband, and a parent; his heart thrills with new emotions, his bosom burns with other fires: but these all imply new duties—all require fresh vigour, diligence, and activity. So of spiritual relations. Our existence links us to the Deity. He is our Creator; for it is he who “hath made us, and not we ourselves.” He is our preserver; in defiance of ourselves we must be dependent, because we live upon his bounty; “He gives us life, and breath, and all things.” All this constitutes obligation, and, on our part, supposes duty; whether it be acknowledged or denied, whether it be regarded or disregarded. But there are other and voluntary ties: voluntary, because although they were formed by the power and mercy of God, the will which was naturally averse from them, is so changed by divine grace, that it cordially, joyfully, eagerly adopts them, with all their consequences. He becomes our Parent, our Redeemer, our Sanctifier; and we are his adopted children, as well as the workmanship of his hand, and the creatures of his power. This increase of relationship to God necessarily includes an increase of obligation. Out of the union which believers have to their Lord, arise both their privileges, their pleasures, and their duties.

Obligations thus constituted are indissoluble. This is true of both natural and spiritual ties. So long as the parent lives, filial duties can never cease. The son grows up to manhood, enters new connections, forms a circle for himself, becomes in his circumstances independent of the father and the mother; but neither God nor nature release him from the silken bonds of affection and of gratitude. He feels that he has incurred a debt, in the years of his infancy and helplessness, which he can never discharge. Respecting those connections which he voluntarily forms, the obligations are reciprocal, but they are no less permanent. Exactly the same characters of perpetuity distinguish our spiritual relations; or rather, upon these last they are more deeply and indelibly inscribed. Man can never renounce his Creator. Many have attempted to do it—in vain: and the effort, the thought argues distraction. He can never be independent of the hand that feeds him, and of the power in whom “he lives, and moves, and has his being.” Atheism can neither affect the existence of God, nor annihilate the obligations of man to him. It may ruin the interests of the creature, but it cannot shake the throne of the Creator; and he who renounces God, will feel how indissoluble are the ties by which he is bound to him, in the day when God rouses himself to vengeance, and renounces him in return; and when all the bonds of his present connection shall be exchanged for chains of wrath.

DIVINE PLANS IN HARMONY WITH DIVINE PERFECTIONS.

IN the operations of Deity all is order, beauty, and consistency. In the works of creation element balances element: the preponderation of one is counteracted by the pressure of its opposite, and thus an equilibrium is maintained among the whole. Equally harmonious and consistent are the mysterious plans of providence. To us they are like chaos, "without form and void"—dark, profound, unfathomable. Does it follow that they are so in themselves? To the eye of superstition the comet carries in its luminous train war, and famine, and pestilence, and whatever scourge can afflict guilty nations: while, perhaps, it is the messenger of peace to distant worlds, rolling far beyond the extent of our vision, through the immensity of space. To the eye of ignorance the starry heavens present a mingled, confused display of trembling lights. To the eye of the philosopher, they wear an appearance far different. Yonder spark he discovers to be a sun, and conceives it the centre of another system. That cluster of glittering specks is to him what the finger-post or the mile-stone is to the traveller; it is a mark of measurement between one quarter of the heavens and another. Those wandering lamps, he perceives, describe a regular orbit; and he predicts, to an hour, their arrival at such and such a point of heaven—or their passage through a given con-

stellation. Such are the plans of providence now to us, a majestic, but confused and boundless piece of machinery: and such shall they become in the world of light, when we shall see them all reduced to order. So in religion—dispensation answers dispensation—the anti-type is exactly delineated in the type—the shades of colouring melt into each other—and, from the present confused masses, the matchless skill of the divine Artist shall produce and perfect his own grand design. In the mean time, let us wait the issue, and in inspecting the progression of the work let us not decide as though it were already accomplished, nor pronounce our judgment, as though we were masters in the science, while we are only allowed to be spectators, or at most scholars.

GRAND EPOCHS IN HUMAN LIFE.

THERE are certain periods in every man's life, distinguished, above all others, for their importance. The magnitude of the events suspended upon them, of the purposes which they bring to maturity, or of the advantages which they secure—impart to them dignity and value. Some of these periods are pleasing, and some are painful: they are hours of joy, or of sorrow: and the heart anticipates them with rapture, or expects them with dismay. Affliction has its distinctions as well as felicity; and in the catalogue preserved in a man's fam-

ily, of memorable events, the day of his death finds a place as well as the day of his birth. But life seldom flows a stream of even tenour : the expansion of its shallow wave is ruffled by the gale of prosperity, or by the blast of adversity ; and it rolls, with perpetual variation, along a channel exposed to every breath of heaven, till it is lost in eternity.

The mother looks back upon the period when her first born came into the world, with inexpressible delight. She hails the return of the day, year by year, with growing pleasure. She sees him increase "in wisdom, and in stature, and in favour with God and man." She remembers no more her sorrow ; nay, it was absorbed in the day when she smiled through her weakness upon his sleeping countenance, and first feebly pressed his cheek with her maternal lip.

The young man is looking forward to the day when he shall attain full age, and be his own master. How slowly weeks, and months, and years appear to creep along ! He calculates not upon the train of ills that the world, which appears so enchanting at a distance, will open upon him. Is life to be new-modelled for him ? Are the plans of providence to be changed that he may walk along a velvet path through this wilderness ? Will the flowers spring spontaneously beneath his steps wherever he places his foot ? Is the house of his pilgrimage to be always swept and garnished ? Yet he flatters himself that life is full of consolation, that its scenes are ever new, and ever pleas-

ing—and that the future contains all which he wants at present.

But there is an hour of more importance than these—an hour of greater magnitude than any other which the hopes or the fears, the pleasures or the pains, the wisdom or the ignorance of man, distinguish in the swift revolutions, and the incessant fluctuations, of this transitory state of existence. It is the hour when the account with heaven must close—when the balance must be struck—when time shall finish with us—when the body shall fall into the dust, and the spirit shall appear naked before God. This is a day which man is, alas! too unwilling to anticipate. This deserves to be noted above all others; whether you consider the certainty of its approach, the solemnity of its features, or the magnitude of its consequences.

MAN HAS NOTHING OF HIS OWN IN WHICH TO GLORY.

MAN has nothing of his own in which to glory. In his best estate he had not anything whereof to boast: but, since his apostasy, and in his present degraded condition, few properties of excellence remain; and he can scarcely take any view of himself, which ought not to cover him with shame and confusion.

Take a momentary survey of the situation of Adam, as he came from the hand of God. You

must regulate your conceptions on this point, by the intelligence respecting it which the Scriptures have communicated: and by those deductions which may be fairly inferred from its concise, but important testimony. He was armed in the panoply of innocence. He reflected the radiance of divine glory. He enjoyed perfect and undisturbed felicity. Youth, beauty, majesty, immortality, were all impressed upon him; and he stood at the head of that creation which God himself pronounced "very good"—proudly pre-eminent. The Deity favoured him with his presence and converse. Angels were his companions. The harps of heaven were heard mingling with his morning and evening devotions; and its songs rolled along the temperate air of blissful Eden. The voice of God, more charming than these, whispered among the trees of the garden; and the communication between earth and heaven was easy, was immediate, was constant. And had this favoured creature nothing in which to glory? Nothing! Every thing commanded gratitude—nothing inspired boasting. He was exactly what God made him: and where there is no merit, glorying ought to be excluded.

If this be true of man in his state of original rectitude, of what can he properly boast now that he is fallen and depraved? His beauty is faded; his primeval lustre is extinguished; his ancient magnificence is departed; his former dignity is degraded; and the image of God is defaced, and

nearly obliterated. Yet he is proud of those fragments of greatness which remain: the few, expiring sparks of his first splendour, light up within him a flame of vanity; he loves still to boast; and we must examine the principles upon which he founds his supposed right to glory. In order to prove these principles false, it is only necessary to point out the subjects which swell this haughty creature with self-importance.

He has no right to boast of his *honours*. These are generally derived: they may be bestowed, by partial favour; they may be worn to decorate vice and to cover infamy; they cannot reach beyond the grave. Death mocks at human majesty; convinces the monarch that his hereditary honours are only lent him, and must pass into the hands of a successor, who shall resign them in his turn; and arrests the hero in his career of glory, while every tongue proclaims his victories. That is a poor boast which a moment may destroy.

He has no right to boast of his *riches*. They were not procured by his own efforts alone. The blessing of God became the source of his wealth. Stay, proud man, and before you glory, learn this wholesome truth: "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it; except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." Without his favour "it is in vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, and to eat the bread of sorrows." Let the wheat boast of its increase, when it lifts its light green head above the

soil. Let the flower boast of its skill, in the disposition of those lovely tints with which it is adorned. But did not a secret hand quicken and expand the one? and a divine pencil ornament and arrange the other? Shall the sun and the shower say, "we gave vegetation to the plant, and beauty to the flower?" Both of these were employed to produce the effect: yet how false, as well as vain, were this boast! for while they were the instruments, God was the agent. Thus has he been in the accumulation of property. It is derived from the same source; it is permitted by the same hand; it is produced by the same power, as the herb and the flower: nor is the existence of the one, and the beauty of the other, more uncertain and transient than "riches, which make to themselves wings, and fly away, as eagles, towards heaven."

He has no right to glory in the *splendour* of his external establishment; or in the *beauty* of his personal configuration. Each of these is a mere circumstance, depending upon other circumstances: a slender link of a fragile chain; a momentary lustre, eclipsed every day, exposed to every blast of adversity, obscured by sudden clouds, and liable to be quenched altogether every instant. And what is it? While it has the instability of the vapour, it is outdone by the lily. It as an excellence which the worm possesses in greater perfection. While it sparkles, it is less dazzling than the butterfly, when he expands his wings, displaying the

tints of the rainbow sprinkled over with gold :
“yea, I say unto you, that even Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these.”

He has no right to glory in his *talents*. These may be distinguished, but they are limited ; and there are higher orders of being by whom he is surpassed. Are they self-derived ? or are they bestowed ? He enjoys them by permission : he received them as a free gift ; and he is responsible for the use, or the abuse of this precious boon. “For who maketh thee to differ from another ? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive ? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it ?” These also have mutability and decay inscribed upon them. Time diminishes, sickness enfeebles, accident may destroy them. It requires years to produce their growth, and to ripen them into maturity. Assiduity of culture is necessary to give them impulse, enlargement, and vigour. They are no less sensible of infirmity and contraction. How easily are they suspended and annihilated, as to their present use and employment, by him who bestowed them ! The philosopher may become an idiot, exhibiting only the life of an animal, descending from the sphere of humanity, with all his great faculties, his laborious researches, and even his natural reason, locked up, never to be released, till death arrives to terminate the calamity, to remove the melancholy spectacle, and to emancipate the prisoner.

He has no right to glory in his *acquirements*. How small a portion of knowledge lies within the grasp of his capacity! how little he obtains of that which is submitted to him! When the human mind is irradiated with intelligence, and illuminated by science, it is still dark: the obscurity is discovered, but not removed; and the last, the highest lesson of wisdom, is to teach us our ignorance. Our acquirements are exposed to the same changes and to the same dangers, as our talents. Age will render the memory treacherous, and steal from the man the treasures which he hoarded there; a single fever can strip him of all; and death levels the distinction between the scholar and his unlearned brother.

He has no right to boast of his *religion*. If it be genuine, it is communicated by the Holy Spirit. It is not his own. It is God "who worketh in him to will and to do his own good pleasure." From him "all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed." It is as much an act of divine power to renew the mind, as to create a world—it requires the same interposition to quicken the spirit, as to raise the dead. Such is the strength of the imagery under which the christian character, in its formation is described, that it follows, if they are appropriate figures, the production of it must be the act of God: nor less its preservation; for it is supplied by the energy by which it was imparted. Thus, if it be genuine, we

owe the glory to God: and if it be not genuine, it is not worth a boast. These all, are the principal subjects in which men glory; and these all, rightly considered, ought to exclude boasting.

PARABLES.

MONUMENTS OF HUMAN GRANDEUR PERISH.

THE monuments of human greatness yield in succession to the destroying influence of time. Whatever is magnificent, or beautiful, or excellent, possesses only a temporary influence, and commands only a transient admiration; in the course of a few years, or at most a few ages, imagination is required to supply departed graces, and genius mourns over extinguished glory. The combinations of society have produced astonishing effects: to man in his collective strength nothing is impossible, and few things appear even difficult; he has dared every thing; and he has achieved so much as amply to repay him for his labours. The extent of sovereignty which he grasped, when he stretched his sceptre over numberless provinces, and planted the line of his dominion from sea to sea, demonstrated the unbounded character of his ambition, and the incalculable variety of his resources. The stupendous productions of art, on which he

inscribed his victories, and which he intended as the pillars of his fame, have combined and exhibited all that is sublime in conception, and all that is graceful in execution. Could he have attached durability to these, his triumph would have been complete—he would have bound time to his chariot-wheels, and rendered the monuments of his greatness coeval with the existence of the heavenly bodies. But that irresistible power has dissolved all the associations which he formed, and overthrown all the structures which he raised. He touched the seats of empire with his commanding sceptre, and the thrones of the earth crumbled into dust. Scarcely was the head of the monarch laid beneath the sod, before his dominion perished. Scarcely the active hand of the warrior stiffened in death, ere the provinces which he had won revolted, and another hero arose—to run the same career of danger and oppression, to mark out the globe for himself, and to resign, in his turn, a crown so hardly achieved. Of Nineveh—of Babylon—we have no remains: Of Egypt we have only characters of degradation: of Rome there exist but the melancholy fragments of ruined grandeur. With the respective empires, the monuments of their power have been defaced or destroyed. Time has wasted the Gardens—extinguished the Paros—prostrated the Colossus—dilapidated the Temple—unravell'd the Labyrinth—broken down the Mausoleum upon its dead—and left the Pyramids to mark the progress of his effacing hand passing

over them, and to deride the folly of human ambition, when its works outlive the name of their projectors.

When these exhibitions of human ability are swept away from the earth, or so much of them only remains as to awaken sentiments of pity more lively than those of admiration, history restores the empire, and science rears the fallen cities anew. Again Palmyra rises from among her ruined temples and tottering pillars: again Rome assumes the sceptre of the world, and binds distant nations to her throne. The work of the destroyer is but half effected, while the record of former times remains. The heroes of antiquity live over again; and the great monarchies burst forth afresh in all their primeval splendour. Letters seem to promise that immortality which neither arms could command, nor arts acquire. The blaze of war is quickly extinguished:—it is indeed a devouring fire; but it is short lived, in proportion to its fierceness. Like the beacon which is kindled to affright the nations, it burned for a night, and expired upon its own ashes. But the inspiration of the poet is a lambent flame, playing around the imagination from age to age, and shedding its mild and brilliant light upon distant lands and times, when the consuming element of discord is forgotten. The magic pen of the historian raises from their resting place the departed shades of princes and warriors, and embodying them in their proper forms, brings them again to act their part upon the stage of time, fills

the world with new agents, and enables us to judge of their characters with ease and accuracy ; while we feel ourselves sheltered from the miseries at the same time that we ascertain the extent of their policy and achievements. Yet this mausoleum of former greatness rears its majestic head only for a season. In vain the poet and the historian promise themselves, or the subjects of their eulogy, immortality : in vain they flatter themselves that they have erected a monument more durable than brass, loftier than the royal elevation of the pyramids ; which neither the wearing shower, the unavailing tempest, the innumerable succession of years, nor the flight of seasons, shall be able to demolish : they dream but of a fame that shall move round the circle of time. Many such a fond enthusiast has floated down the stream, without leaving even the wreck of his name as a memorial. And of those who have stood highest on the records of renown, a part of their works has perished. Time has not spared even science. The precious fragments of ancient writings resemble the ruins of some great empire : enough remains to delight, to impress, to instruct ; but these remnants cause us to lament the more bitterly that which is lost to us, as an evil irreparable, and afford a lesson more ample of human vanity than of human distinction.

CHRIST.—A TEACHER.

IN confirmation of the judgment repeatedly passed upon the matchless character of our Lord's teaching, the evangelists have sometimes detailed its features according to their apprehension; and remarked, "He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." This authority could not intend severity of manner; for this would have been to teach "*as the scribes,*" who laid much stress upon the weight and dignity of their office, and manifested but little condescension "to men of low estate." How harshly, how arrogantly, they censured the followers of Jesus! "This people, who knoweth not the law, are cursed." How swift to judge! how slow to reclaim! how destitute of holy sympathy! even had their accusation been well founded. Not with such authority did Jesus teach: his authority was power, impression, effect—arising from the sublimity of the truths which he preached, the wisdom with which he unfolded them, and the clearness with which he applied them. Conviction followed his words, for demonstration accompanied them: they were spirit, they were life. He could appeal to the rulers as well as to the multitude, and say, "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen." His instructions had weight, both from the importance of their matter, and the earnest, affectionate, energetic manner in which they were addressed to a perishing and long neglected people. The nega-

tive, he taught them “not as the scribes,” leaves us much to supply. He reversed all the haughty, censorious, obscure, and careless habits of that degenerate class of teachers. His *condescension* was manifest, in addressing the multitude, whom they treated with contempt, and left to be destroyed by vice and ignorance. He sympathized in their privations, shared their poverty, elevated their hopes, imparted to them knowledge, and soothed their afflictions. He listened to their inquiries, resolved their doubts, bore with their infirmities, and was unwearied in his communications. He spake a language which they understood, and chose subjects which they felt; thus leading them from one degree of knowledge to another. He did not disdain to walk with them, to eat with them; to enforce his public instructions by permitting private audiences. His *gentleness* was apparent in all his addresses. He did not scatter curses with a lavish and indiscriminate hand; but, although all judgment was committed to him, chose rather to exercise his delightful commission—to seek and to save that which was lost. Yes; and he felt it to be a delightful commission, although its execution entailed upon him numberless privations and persecutions, and an ignominious death. The Shepherd of Israel gathered the lambs with his arm, and carried them in his bosom; he collected that flock which his servants had scattered, and the unfaithful pastors devoured. He entreated, persuaded, wept—quenching the lightning of his eyes in tears

of love; and silencing the thunders of heaven, that the whispers of mercy might be heard. The hypocrites and the self-righteous alone were the objects of his holy indignation; upon them he turned the power of his eloquence and the terrors of his frown; but he looked invitation to the poor, convinced, despairing sinner, while he said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The *luminous* character of his teaching stood opposed to the heavy literature or the unintelligible exposition of the scribes. How could they, who did not themselves understand the law, who could not discern the Messiah in it, unfold its mysteries, or apply its revelations? Referring its leading features to an idol of their own imagination, while the great original stood before them, they must have been teachers no less obscure than unsafe. A temple from which the very types were fast vanishing away, and from which the Saviour to whom they related was expelled, could have but few attractions; and the multitudes flocked to the side of the mountain, or the borders of the lake, to hear that exposition of the law, and to receive that simple, impressive, convincing information, which they looked for in vain, from the appointed teachers, and in that once distinguished house of prayer from which the glory was departed. The *earnestness* and energy of our Lord's teaching must have formed a strong contrast to the supineness and indifference of the scribes. Seeking only their own emolument and distinction,

they were careless of the interests of the imperishable spirit. Their own prophets had so severely arraigned such teachers, that they read their own condemnation in the synagogue every sabbath day ; and if they were so blind as not to perceive, or so hardened as not to regard it, it is not to be imagined that those who smarted under their authority, and perished through their neglect, could be equally blind, or equally indifferent. Where could they look for a faithful shepherd, when the whole priesthood was alike corrupt? Behold! a new Teacher arises—indifferent to circumstances—careful only of principles. He can teach in any place, and at any time. He is found labouring, in season and out of season : He preaches from a boat, on the side of a hill, in the desert, by the way side—he consecrates every spot by his doctrines and prayers. And, oh! how eloquently he pleads the cause of man with himself! how fervently he argues against prejudice! how divinely he pities and forgives! how clearly he describes human ruin and redemption! This, so attractive in itself, became irresistible when contrasted with the pride and indifference of their teachers. No wonder the common people heard him “gladly.” Being crafty then, did he catch them with guile? O, no! disdaining all art, influenced alone by love to man, he was justifying his name, JESUS; he was accomplishing his work as a Saviour; he was winning the souls which he was about to purchase with his own blood.

Such were some of the characters of our Lord's general teaching; and they shame our levity, they censure our indolence, they reprove our carelessness, as those to whom he has deigned to commit the word of this salvation. Lives there the minister, who does not feel the burning blushes of shame and indignation against himself rise to his cheek, while he contemplates the work and character of his Lord?—O, for the mind of Christ, to rest upon those who enter into the labours of his love, and the ministry once committed to the diligent and faithful hands of his apostles!

THE MODEL OF A GOSPEL MINISTER SHOULD BE CHRIST AND HIS APOSTLES.

WHEN the illustrious rival of Demosthenes, after an unsuccessful struggle to share with him the palm of eloquence, retreated from the public eye to conceal his defeat in retirement, he had the magnanimity to place the oration which had occasioned his disgrace in the hands of his pupils; and when he saw their countenances kindling as they read it, until they were unable longer to restrain their feelings, which broke out into expressions of unbounded admiration, so far from suffering jealousy to withhold from his victor the well earned meed of praise, he encouraged their enthusiasm, and exclaimed, "What then would you have said if you had heard him deliver it?" With reflections some

what correspondent, I read the sermons of our Lord and his apostles, as they are recorded in the sacred volume. Glowing and elegant passages, presented only to the eye, lose half the efficacy they possessed, when the ear was associated with this sense, and when every sentiment was embellished by corresponding tones and gestures. The orations of such men as Demosthenes and Cicero may well be admired: for what must have been their original fire, when they retain so much heat still, and present themselves to us so advantageously, without the auxiliaries of manner and emphasis after the lapse of so many years, and when the interests which excited them have ceased! The sermons of our Lord and of his apostles, have the disadvantages common to all written discourses; and some peculiar to themselves. They are transmitted to us mere fragments—as sketches, hastily but faithfully drawn. And, if, for instance, the train of discussion pursued by St. Paul at Athens, appearing on the pages of the Acts of the Apostles as a line faintly traced by a masterly hand, rushes through the mind, and overpowers the feelings; what must it have been to have seen and heard him on that occasion, when his spirit was stirred within him, and he stood to plead the cause of truth and religion, surrounded by the altars of superstition, and the images of idolatry! If the imagination is early inspired by the most beautiful specimens of classical eloquence, the judgment must often regret that so much force should be

wasted upon subjects so trivial—upon circumstances local and transient, upon fading interests; and still more must the moral taste be shocked, that these illustrious talents should be, as they frequently were, prostituted to the service of vice, and heavenly eloquence debased to excuse or commend brutal passions. This accusation can never be alleged against the inspired volume. Superior to all other writings in the majesty of its style, it infinitely excels them in the character of its subjects: it never seduces, never trifles, never advocates or extenuates evil: it is irresistibly eloquent, and it is essentially true.

To these writings, therefore, rather than to any of the admired models of antiquity, should the preacher go, to gather both the matter and the manner of his sermons. It may become the physician to compare his knowledge and experience with the researches and observations of others celebrated in former ages for excelling in his science. It behoves the politician to be versed in the history of ancient as well as modern times, that he may be well acquainted with the secret springs of government, and develope the causes which impede or facilitate their operation. It is profitable to the sculptor to recur to the remaining specimens of those mighty masters of an art which was long upon the decline, and which has not yet wholly recovered those just proportions and that graceful symmetry which distinguished the chisels of antiquity. Nor would we deprive the minister

of those gratifications which must result to him as a scholar, from an acquaintance with the pages of classical literature: but as a preacher, we send him to learn his science, and the best method of imparting it, to the models presented in the scriptures themselves: and call him from the Grecian or the Roman orator, to learn of Peter, and Paul, and James, and John; above all, to sit at the feet of Jesus himself. For, if these remarks are just, respecting the servants, they must apply with still greater force to the Master; and the parables of Jesus contain more perfect examples of the wisdom and beauty of his instructions, than any sketches of his continued discourses furnish; because they are finished, as to the detail of their imagery; they are not mere outline—they are filled up, and the occasions of them are recorded sufficiently to enable us to ascertain with precision the sentiment conveyed in the figure employed.

THE MINISTRY WHICH GOD APPROVES.

THAT preaching must be always deemed the most scriptural, which, while it attracts the vicious by the force and affection of its appeals, is found to reclaim them by the purity and divinity of its principles. The sermons which only please the superficial, or interest the learned by their speculations or gratify the polite by their taste and eloquence, may indeed give a transient popularity to

the preacher—which he ought to despise, if lent him on such grounds; or distinguish him as a man of elegant literature; but the ministry which God approves is founded upon the grand and convincing doctrines of the gospel; and while it often gives offence because of its plainness and simplicity, never fails to subdue human obduracy, and, gathering the vilest characters around the cross, while it pronounces their pardon, requires their obedience.

DUTIES.

REVEALED TRUTHS AFFORD TO FAITH ITS PROPER EXERCISE.

THESE are of a nature inexplicable by any merely mental powers; and to be apprehended only by a principle as spiritual as themselves. The senses, and objects of sense are adapted to each other. The reason, and subjects of reason, are mutually intellectual, and precisely accordant. But doctrines which are not cognizable by sense, nor attainable by reason, demand a faculty of their own, by which they may be appreciated and apprehended. And let not the sceptic exult, as though this concession involved the rationality of religion—it is most rational always to suppose faculties adapted to the subjects to which they are to be applied; and I do not see, if the being of God be admitted,

and it be granted, as an inevitable corollary, that it is of infinite importance to man to know his duties to his Creator, how this knowledge is to be obtained, except by revelation, or how revelation can be supposed to act, except by faith. The things which we want to know, in such a connexion, lie beyond the line of nature; and reason sought them in the exercise of all the brightness of her faculties, and the ardour of her inquiries, until baffled and wearied in her researches, without having discovered "the mystery which was hid from ages and generations," she was compelled to desist, and to confess that "the world by wisdom knew not God." Then revelation interposed; and "life and immortality were brought to light by the gospel." Nothing contrary to reason can be justly alleged against her; but we find every where, every thing that surpasses it. She leads us beyond the confines of nature, to lose ourselves in the Infinite—beyond material suns, to adore the uncreated Fountain of Light. She takes reason by the hand, as the companion of her way, till the powers of reason fail—and then, spreading her immortal pinions, bears the spirit into eternity and places it at the foot of the throne of God.

CHRISTIANITY DISTINGUISHED FROM MODERN PHILOSOPHY.

“THOU shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” In this duty christianity distinguishes itself from modern philosophy ; which, affecting an universal philanthropy, trampled upon home, interests, and natural affections. It theoretically projected the moral cultivation of the world ; and commenced its disastrous and ruinous career by plucking up the hedge planted around the domestic and social enclosure. It made attention, to the individual, a crime ; while it boasted of love to the species. Revelation advances hand in hand with nature. Its auspicious influence begins at home. It is felt first by the family—then in the neighbourhood. It acknowledges patriotism, without forgetting humanity : and serves the cause of universal benevolence, by cherishing the charities of natural connexion. But here it does not rest—nor was ever designed to stay its beneficent purpose. Every human being is my neighbour, when that human being is in want, and I have it in my power to succour him. It more than adopts the maxim of the heathen poet—“I am a man, and nothing human is foreign from my heart.” It turns sentiment into action—and urges conviction to exertion. It writes upon the heart, “Pure religion and undefiled, from God even the Father, is this—to visit the fatherless and the widow in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.” Match

less combination! The God of purity, who demands the sanctity of his creatures, and says, "Without holiness shall no man see the Lord;" is also the God of love—and commands, "Be ye kindly affectioned one towards another. Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

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Wherever christianity has flourished, mercy has reigned. She has imparted to our country her proudest superiority. It is not the superiority of her genius—although the fame of her children has filled all lands, and gone forth to the end of the world. It is not the superiority of her arms—although she has carried her thunder to the most distant climes, and subjected to herself the world of waters. But it is the superiority of her charities. She is satisfied to yield to matchless Greece, to imperial Rome, and to many a modern state, the splendor of palaces, and the magnificent monuments of architectural skill: but she yields to none, she surpasses all, in her beneficence; and she subordinates even the arts to her compassion, and displays the fairest and most perfect models of their excellence in her houses of mercy. This is her living temple—consecrated to the God to whom she owes her liberties—and from whom she received the command, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

Exulting in his favour, and adopting love to him as the principle of our lives, we shall find that the

enlargement of the action must correspond with the infinity of its source. Overstepping the limits of political demarcation, it will find a brother in every country: immortal as the Deity from whom it emanates, it will triumph over age and infirmity—and we “shall not be weary in well-doing;” conscious of its source, it will live amidst the agonies of death; and rising above the tomb, it will find its centre in God himself, and its full expansion, its unfettered exercise, amidst the sinless ranks of angels, the spirits of the just made perfect, the glorious inhabitants of heaven, in a world where love, and love alone, forever reigns.

SUBMISSION IN AFFLICTION.

It is always easy to give to others the best possible rules for the regulation of their passions, tempers, and spirits in the hour of affliction—but, oh! if the visitation is upon ourselves, all our philosophy, and too much of our religion, forsakes us. We forget our sufferings, and too often our obligations, and feel only the smart of our chastisement. We are intent upon the rod, until we forget altogether “Him who hath appointed it;” and that which was falsely charged upon patient Job, is but too true of us—“Behold thou hast instructed many, and thou hast strengthened the weak hands. Thy words have upholden him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees. But

now it has come upon thee and thou faintest; it toucheth thee, and thou art troubled."

What, then, is the submission required in affliction? Let us at least learn the duty, if it be only to ascertain how far we fall short of it, and to be humbled accordingly. It is not to be *insensible*. What good end can affliction answer, if it be not felt? Where is christian heroism, if nothing be endured? What sacrifice is it, if that which is required be not valued? Christianity knows nothing of the stoicism which forbids the heart to suffer, and the tear to flow. Its glory is to feel all the affliction, and to produce a consolation which shall more than alleviate it—more than counterbalance it—which shall turn the most threatening circumstances into the most essential benefit—and from the trial of our faith, educe the salvation of our souls. Philosophy boasts of making the heart as adamant—so that the lightning shall strike it, and find it an impassive, impenetrable, insoluble rock of ice: christianity professes to make it "a heart of flesh," alive to every impression; all susceptibility and sensibility—vital through every nerve, fibre, and particle—and to subordinate the whole to the divine will, and the divine government. O, glorious triumph! the triumph of the most perfect feeling, and of the most perfect faith, at the same moment!

As it is not to be insensible, so submission implies that it is not to be *hardened*. The christian has the fortitude to encounter death, but he has

not the courage to defy God. "Who ever hardened himself against him, and prospered?" But it is not, with the good man, a subject of calculation. It is a principle emanating from God—subordinating all things to its influence—recognizing him under all circumstances—and in submitting to his wise and gracious, though frequently painful, and always mysterious appointments—sheltering itself under his power, and reposing in his tenderness. It is not the winding up of every faculty of the mind, and every corporeal agent to the pitch of endurance; but the prostration of every mental power, and every earthly possession, before the great Proprietor of all—thus placing his own at his entire disposal. No *resistance* is opposed to the rights of Deity—but the acknowledgment is, "it is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good." "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" "Not my will, thy will be done." No *complaint* is breathed—nature may speak, but ought not to accuse—she may give vent to her grief, but not charge God foolishly. "Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil also?" "He hath not dealt with us after our sins, neither hath he rewarded us according to our iniquities." No *flight* is attempted like that of our guilty first parent, when he would have concealed himself amidst the trees of the garden—or the no less vain effort of Jonah, to flee from his commission, and the presence of him by whom it was imposed. No *imputation* will be al-

leged against the moral government of God, or the benevolence of his character; nor will hard thoughts be indulged of him, even in the heart. That they may be suggested is probable; but that they will be, by the christian, repelled with righteous indignation, is certain: and submissive acquiescence will rise into entire resignation, inducing the temper, while it employs the language of the text—"The will of the Lord be done."

CAPTIVITY THE CHARACTERISTIC OF SPIRIT.

Activity is the characteristic of spirit; and nothing so completely distinguishes it from the body, as the instrument of its volitions, than this body like allmatter, waits for a foreign impulse, to put all its fine and beautiful organization into motion. It is most delicately and surprisingly adapted to all the purposes to which its operations can possibly be applied. In some instances the gossamerwing of the summer's fly is not a film more attenuated than its fibres—in others, iron and brass are less durable than its muscular action—in all, a wisdom and complexity are visible, which not only surpass human skill, but which defy human research, and compel the anatomist to admire what he comprehends, and to leave unsolved the great results of nerves and animal spirits, and sympathies, in which he is reduced to employ terms relative to effects, the causes of which lie in the mysterious union be-

tween mind and matter, far beyond the cognizance of the most sensitive touch, the most penetrating eye, and the most patient investigation—while philosophy, speculating upon the little that is certainly known, presumes much upon that which is undiscovered, and often weaves a theory of which ingenuity is its principal recommendation. In the mean while, all this is but the external display of the matchless machinery—the main-spring of which is *spirit*. Life was communicated directly from the Creator; and is so immediately imparted in all successive generations. It is granted at an unknown moment—it takes its departure as secretly. In both cases we are conscious of its presence or absence, only by certain external movements—the source of the impulse is always secret. Yet, while it is encircled with a body, which seems rather its prison than its palace, because of the manifest restraint which it lays upon its mighty energies, its powers are not to be wholly limited to the vehicle of its volitions. Sometimes it breaks the boundaries of its mortal condition—soars beyond all material worlds, and all their suns, in its unfettered imagination: and at others, when the body is laid asleep in the unconsciousness of animation temporally suspended, roams far remote from the fields of nature, embodies uncreated forms, and presents the awful and inexplicable phenomenon of dreams—the enigma of philosophy, and the sure pledge of immortality.

TRUST IN GOD INCOMPATIBLE WITH THE
NEGLECT OF DUTY.

HE only can be truly said to confide in God, who waits upon him in his ordinances, in his word, and by earnest supplication to learn his will—who watches narrowly every signal of his providence—receives thankfully every intimation of his pleasure—obeys cheerfully every indication of the divine mind—and employs diligently all the means with which God has furnished him, to promote his own interests in conformity with those of society. Every thing has its season, and “he hath made every thing beautiful in his time.” But if the season is suffered to pass away unimproved—all is lost. And who is to be censured? the beneficent Creator, whose unwearied liberality affords a succession of mercies, and an ample supply of good? or the shameless trifler, who neglects the opportunity, and slights the benefactor? “Go to the ant, thou slug-gard; consider her ways and be wise.” Shall he who suffers the seed time to pass, and his field to lie fallow, accuse Providence because he has no harvest? Oh, ungrateful man! how often did the seasons pass, and lift up their warning voice in vain. Spring, the most beautiful of them all, the earliest and fairest daughter of the year, came—and in accents which charmed the nightingale, said, “Lo, the winter is past, the rain is over, and gone. The flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is

heard in our land. The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise—and come away!” And the insensible trifler slumbered. She scattered her perfumes, and showered her blossoms, and departed. Then came Summer, and found the sluggard asleep. He came, with his face embrowned with labour, and glowing with energy. He wore the circlet of his majesty, a wreath of the fiercest sunbeams—and cried aloud in the voice of his own thunder—“What meanest thou, O sleeper; arise, and call upon thy God.” The loiterer was roused, he started up—he saw all nature teeming with life, and replete with energy—he gazed for a moment, admired the scene—laid himself down, and slept again. Summer began to veil the intensity of his brightness, and yielded to Autumn—she drew near, with a solemn and gentle pace—and when she had gathered her ripe clusters, passed by the sleeper, and sprinkled him with her chilling dew-drops—while she admonished—“Redeem the time—work while it is called day—for the night cometh when no man can work:” and retired, unheard. At length when the hollow blast announced the approach of the closing season, and the lastsear leaf was swept from the tree—the man awoke, to catch the parting gleams of the setting sun—and to see Winter ride on, in his car of storms, driven by the whirlwind, and canopied with clouds and darkness. And while he casts a desponding eye upon the dreary waste of desolation, stretched around him

on every side, can such a man presume to arraign the benignity of providence, because he finds himself without shelter, and without provision?

While we avoid negligence, therefore, on the one hand, let us beware of *undue anxieties* on the other; equally inconsistent as these are with that submission to providence, which, in the use of the prescribed means, confides the whole to the divine paternity. Shall not he, who has brought us hitherto, through every difficulty—through perils seen and unseen—who has sustained us, in the presence of friends and of enemies—who has done for us “exceeding abundantly above all that we could either ask or think”—who has made our strength equal to our day, and his grace sufficient for us—who has disappointed our fears and surpassed our hopes—who has never neglected, never abandoned, never forgotten us—shall not he be trusted with the little of life that remains? “O ye of little faith, wherefore do ye doubt?”—“Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all other things shall be added unto you.” “Take, therefore, no thought,” no doubting, anxious, undue thought, “for the morrow:—for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” He who really submits to Providence, is armed against every foe, fortified against every danger—prepared for every event—superior to every calamity—

“His hand the good man fastens on the skies—

Then bids the earth roll, nor feels her idle whirl!”

He defies time, chance, and change—for he trusts in Him, who is the same “yesterday, and to day, and forever!”

SOCIAL INTERCOURSE.

BEFORE a man can confer upon society, or receive from it advantages, he must possess social *affections*, and form social *habits*. Without the first, he is incapable of deriving satisfaction from intercourse with his fellow-men. If his hopes and his fears, his pleasures and his pains, are selfish, he comes into contact with society by accident only: he never seeks its interchanges of kindness: the collision shocks rather than pleases him: he is incapable of association: circumstances may throw him and his neighbour together, but affection alone can form an union; this is the cement of kindred spirits; and without it, the man withdraws so soon as possible to his solitude, like the brute, to devour his morsel alone. There may be temporary adhesion, where there is no permanent combination—locality, without admixture: pressure may unite two bodies for a season, when there is no actual junction. There may be communion without congeniality—a confederacy of interests or convenience, without concord of mind and temper. These alliances are fortuitous, and cannot be permanent: while they last, they want the true social bond—soul; and when they are dissolved, there is no

parting pang—it is rather a subject of gratulation. General intercourse partakes too much of this adventitious and selfish character, to deserve the nobler appellation of social—it is contact, but not communion.

We have spoken of *habits*, as well as of affections, as essential to society. A social state requires something attractive and winning in the manners; some pliability of temper; some self-denial; some sacrifices. Some of these things will appear under the division of personal duties; when describing particular dispositions of mind, we shall easily see, what tempers and manners best suit the social state; and others will be specified on the present occasion, as we follow the subject: general hints respecting habits, are all that can now be furnished; with a few obligations, as universal as they are obvious, which must be enumerated.

Habits of *peace* should be cultivated. A temper apt to take fire, is like Samson's foxes carrying their burning brands into the corn-fields—their course is fury, and its consequences desolation. An intermeddling temper, fond of prying into privacy, of tale bearing, of scattering abroad the uncertain information so imperfectly gleaned, and so surreptitiously obtained, produces incalculable mischief;—it resembles Solomon's madman, scattering "firebrands, arrows, and death; and saying, Am I not in sport?" The scourge of this disposi-

tion must fall under the vices of the tongue, in the discussion of its government.

“If it be possible as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men”—and this is to be done only by *avoiding occasions of offence*. “Study to be quiet, and to do your own business”—this is the christian rule, and it is the most simple and effectual that can be imagined to secure the advantages of society : which will depend more upon our habits of mildness and conciliation, than upon our most active services, even were these supported by a genius as powerful as our spirits are ardent. In preserving union, more is to be avoided, than accomplished : and our most severe, and most important duties, will be often those rather which are passive, than those which are active.

Habits of *justice* are required, without which, the social compact must be speedily dissolved. The oppressor, like Ishmael, has his hand against every man, and every man’s hand against him. He who refuses to act his part in society, is a fragment broken off from the grand structure, deforming the edifice by the little chasm which he has left, and lying neglected upon the ground, while he partakes of neither the grandeur or the strength, the unity or the durability of the building. Such a fragment is the indolent ; who contributes nothing to the general weal, and is treated in return with just indifference.

Moderation is of importance in our social habits. The mind that has no resources in itself is too apt

to prey upon others—to invade retirement—to interrupt private duties—to tax the patience and urbanity of the friendly and the industrious:—and this, not intentionally, but from an habitual sloth, which incapacitates the social persecutor from duly estimating the time so invaluable to others—and a no less habitual selfishness, which forgets what is due to other interests than its own, and too highly rates its personal gratifications. “Withdraw thy foot from thy neighbour’s house, lest he be weary of thee, and hate thee.”

Habits of *delicacy* deeply influence society. There is a rudeness that offends a gentle spirit, where no evil is intended by the boisterous associate. Himself a stranger to milder emotions, he feels astonished that those who would prize his sterling qualities shrink from his company. But if the enjoyments of society arise from that kind and amiable spirit of mutual accommodation, which calls forth the buds and blossoms of the moral and intellectual world, as the genial influences of the spring unfold the flowers and foliage of the visible creation, this turbulent invader of the social circle comes, like the east wind of that season of promise, beauty, and mutability, to spread desolation over the fair scenery, by blowing upon it too roughly.

Habits of *consistency*, must be considered as essential to the well-being of society, and should be carefully cultivated. Caprice destroys confidence—and confidence is the foundation of all real com-

munion. If one mode of conduct be pursued to-day, and another to-morrow, the uncertainty annihilates trust. If that which pleases one moment, offends the next—farewell the pleasure of intercourse, and with it the social union. To press this individual point of consistency, must belong to the government of the temper, hereafter to be considered: but in speaking of those general habits upon which the weal of society depends, it is of importance to insist upon it, that those who would avail themselves of its advantages, should give themselves the trouble to know their own mind, and not to subject all who approach them occasionally, or are connected with them more intimately, to the uncertainty whether they are to be received with the chilling apathy of indifference, the lowering frown of displeasure, or the warm cordiality of friendship; and the still greater uncertainty from what possible cause this mutable and capricious deportment arises.

There is a consistency also which society expects from age and station. That which would be levity in age, possesses a charm of sprightliness in youth. That which would be unbecoming in one station of life, is natural, easy, unconstrained and amiable in another. From elders, referring as well to office as to age, the apostle requires gravity; and let no one attempt to justify, upon this demand, whatever be his profession, or whatever his time of life, a morose, supercilious, unbending spirit. Suavity, cheerfulness, and socia-

bility, are consistent with the most solemn calling, and the most advanced periods of life. It is difficult to say, which is most disgusting—old age affecting childhood, or childhood aping old age. If childishness must, in some melancholy instances, be associated with advanced years, let it be the imbecility of the understanding, and not the weakness of the heart—let it be apparent that the effects deplored are the ravages of time, and not the choice of a vain, worldly, trifling imagination. For “aged women” to deck themselves like girls, to retain affectations which were never tolerated by good sense, but overlooked in the personal graces with which they were accompanied, and pardoned because of the tender age in which they were indulged—would move derision, if shame were not at hand to suppress it. For “aged men” in their dotage, to imagine themselves in their boyhood, betrays them into absurdities as pernicious to society as odious to themselves. The counterpart of this, is the affectation of experience, wisdom, and authority, on the part of childhood and youth. Advancing years, and habitual contact with the world, will teach suspicion soon enough, far too soon, for the honour of human nature, and the comfort of the individual—but to see the youth, who is little more than a child, locking up his heart, and casting a doubtful eye upon those by whom he is surrounded, argues something wrong within—a consciousness of some concealed motives on his own part, which induce that suspicion of others, the justice of which experience cannot

have taught him, and the existence of which is so hateful to the benevolent spirit, the undisguised character, and the frank emotions of unsophisticated youth, that observation alone would not be sufficiently powerful to impress it upon the generous heart.

There is also a consistency of a higher character, giving perfection to all these general habits so necessary to society; it is *religious* consistency, on the part of a christian, and is marked by his purity. He loses none of his civil rights by christianity: he is not withdrawn from the social circle; but he is eminently qualified to inform, improve and ornament it. "I pray not," said the departing Saviour in his last prayer—"that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil." To walk through and not inhale its pestilential atmosphere—to scatter around him life and healing as he advances—is his glorious prerogative. He is required to "adorn the doctrine of God his Saviour in all things." Purity is his principle—consistency its application. He bears about with him the nature of man: but shews every where impressed upon it the image of God.

PARENTAL AFFECTION.

THERE are emotions too powerful to be expressed; too ethereal to be substantiated; too spiritual to be embodied. Such are the, vivid, varied, attenuated anxieties of parental tenderness: yet

Solomon's powerful genius arrested and perpetuated them : and such is his commanding eloquence, that they scarcely seem to lose any thing, by being clothed in language ; his expressions are the types of his affections ; his appeal rises warm from his heart. "Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding. For I give you good doctrine, forsake you not my law. For I was my father's son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother. He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words : keep my commandments, and live." This is not egotism : it is the expression of powerful feeling, and manifests the heart to be more deeply interested for others than for himself. A man may speak of himself, when it is to benefit others ; to give greater weight to his counsels ; to take deeper root in the affections ; and to obtain a firmer hold upon them, for their instruction and advantage, without being an egotist. Egotism is a compound of selfishness and vanity ; in the above text, there is not a particle of either. It is full of paternal emotion : and, while the father speaks of himself, he is thinking of his children ; he speaks of himself only to interest them more effectually, and give force to his instructions ; and never thinks of himself less, than while he is proposing to them his own example, and that of his parents ; to whose memory a gush of filial tenderness breaks forth, and commingles with his paternal anxieties.

There is, in this admonition, I know not what

charm of recollection. The past comes again, clothed in the bright radiance of hope, such as it once appeared, before reality had extinguished its light, and broken its day-dream. Childhood returns with all its intensity of ardour, all its simplicity of character, all its buoyancy of spirits, all its fearless confidence, all its lively gaiety, all its thoughtless mirth, all its varied emotions, all its warm affections. The vivacity which beguiled the parent of many a smile, and drew forth also many a tear—which, in placing before him all he loved, shewed him at the same moment all he had to fear—returns upon the father: he remembers what he was as a child, and what his parents were to him; he remembers counsels little heeded at the time, and too much neglected afterwards; and, without forgetting that he is himself a parent, he places before his own children the wisdom of his father, and the result of his own experience. It is impossible for me to convey to others, in any adequate language, the emotions which this passage, so full of feeling and of gentleness, awakens in my bosom. It seems to me to speak, on the part of the writer, of departed joys, recalled by the occasion, but not to be retained: the flashings of youthful pleasures, and vivacity upon old age, like the fitful coruscations of the aurora borealis upon a northern sky at midnight—enchanting, but momentary; bright, but cold; playing over a scene of darkness with partial, sudden, transient illumination, to leave the shades deeper and more dreary

than before. Such are the recollections of childhood and youth, with their train of hopes disappointed, promises blighted, advantages neglected, and knowledge spurned, until too dearly bought by experience.

FILIAL DUTIES.

Love, is the first and grand spring of filial duty. To suppose its absence, is to libel human nature. The claims of the mother are so gentle, and those of the father so reasonable, that both ought to be irresistible. I have stated the principle, because of its importance, in giving character to duty—not as requiring either explanation or defence. I send the young man home to his mother's painful anxieties on his account—to her watchings over him in sickness—her caresses of his infancy—her tears—her fidelity : I send him to his father's counsels—his labours—his sacrifices—his manly tenderness : these are to act upon his heart ; and if there be a son or a daughter, upon whose heart these considerations will not act, to produce correspondent love, I have the misfortune to have found one of those whom the apostle places upon the blackest catalogue of human crimes, and whom he describes “ as without natural affection.”

Docility will be the product of this principle. The ingenuous child will defer to the opinion of his father—will reverence his wisdom, and cheerfully yield to his authority—will acknowledge that

his matured understanding is fitter to guide his course, than his own twilight judgment; and will give that good and tender father credit, for intending in all his arrangements, his advantage, and this only. He will yield, not only without a struggle, but with joy, to the instructions of that mother, whose soul of love looks at him through her eyes, and whose voice trembles with emotions of tenderness, while she exhorts him—"What, my son? and what, the son of my womb? and what, the son of my vows?" Let my young female friends listen—Never choose a man for your husband, who has been an undutiful son. You will have no hold upon him: believe me, he that has shewn no filial affections, has no heart at all—do not trust him with your peace. He may have a thousand personal graces, and a thousand acquired accomplishments, but this one defect annihilates the whole. And woe to that unhappy young man, who shall choose the partner of his life from amongst perverse daughters: he has taken to his bosom, a fire that will consume him. The best pledge of future relative excellences must be sought among the earliest indications of filial duty. A good son, and a good daughter, cannot make a bad wife, or a profligate husband.

The claims of filial duty are *absolute and indissoluble*. The God who made you requires them at your hands. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honour thy father and thy mother (which is the first commandment with promise,) that it may be well with thee, and that

thou mayest live long on the earth." It is remarkable that this is the only moral precept that has a distinct promise attached to it, and that of a temporal and immediate nature: and surely shews in what estimation in the sight of God is filial duty. On the other hand, how dreadful is his figurative denunciation—"The eye that mocketh his father, and despiseth to obey his mother; the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it." How tremendous is his sentence—"Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or his mother." How justly severe his ancient law, which decreed "the stubborn and rebellious son to die by stoning under the hand of the men of the city where he dwelt," as a pest of society not to be endured.

How full and ample are the instructions of filial duty, both in the Old and New Testaments! and how illustrious are those *examples* by which they are supported.

The filial reverence of *Isaac*, was marked on an occasion of all others the most important—the choice of a wife. And this single instance of filial piety speaks volumes, both to parents and children. I will venture two remarks, upon which incalculable interests are suspended. It is absolutely essential to the duty of a child, not to form such a connexion without consulting the feelings, and being guided by the counsels, of the parent. And, oh! let me impress upon the hearts of parents the

counter duty of consulting, in all their predilections, the hearts of their children. I know of no act of tyranny more cruel, than availing themselves either of the authority with which the laws of their country arm them, or the influence with which nature invests them, to urge against the affections and the judgment, the formation of a connexion which cannot be dissolved, and which must necessarily involve the happiness, or misery, of an entire life.

The example of *Moses*—at the height of his power and grandeur—in the reverence which he paid to Jethro, who was only his father in-law—should teach filial duty.

Solomon never appeared so great, as when he rose from his throne, and bowed himself before his mother, Bathsheba—when she appeared as a petitioner, and he was discharging the duties of a sovereign.

Ruth—gentle, excellent *Ruth*—throws upon filial duties the lustre of an almost unrivalled example. “Entreat me not,” said she, “to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Where thou diest I will die, and there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me.” And she received a full recompense from “the Lord God of Israel, under the shadow of whose wings she came to trust.”

Timothy, sitting at the feet of his mother Eunice,

and his grandmother Lois, and learning from them the truths of those "Scriptures which were able to make him wise unto salvation, through faith that is in Christ Jesus," must interest every youthful heart.

But a greater than all these, "Jesus himself subject to his parents," put the crown of glory upon the head of filial duty.

These claims are also *indissoluble*. Oh! I would not, for the universe, carry in my bosom, for one hour, the scorpion stings which must torment the ungrateful child, when he turns from the grave of his parent. But he, who has carried his filial obligations and tenderness to the last sad offices, and fixed to them no limit but that which death prescribes, may in that solemn moment lift his eyes to heaven, and to the Parent who reigns there, and say, "My Father, thou shalt be the guide of my youth"—and he shall be accepted!

SUICIDE.

No sophistry can justify, no eloquence can palliate, no example can consecrate this offence against God, society, and the individual himself. Insanity, indeed, if it be really substantiated, by depriving the individual of a reasonable control over his passions, absolves him from moral responsibility. But in the face of this offence, it is such a palpable sin against nature and providence, that charity induces

the conclusion of mental aberration, frequently upon very slender evidence. This reluctance to believe that the act could be done, except under the influence of a disordered judgment, speaks loudly the general conviction of mankind as to the guilt of self-murder. *That* will admit of no satisfactory defence which the common sense, and the common feeling of mankind regard with abhorrence; and which their compassion for the offender, condemns but the more strongly. Although nature is depraved, there are certain great principles remain not wholly obliterated—the traces of original rectitude—and which are recognized in all ages, and among all nations: and when these are restored by divine influence, the man becomes a christian. This is called “the *renewing* of the mind.” But in their common state, they revolt from self-murder, as an act equally condemned by reason, conscience, and religion. The last is the infallible guide; and serves as a light to the operations of the former.

The *origin* of suicide may be, therefore, traced almost uniformly to *infidelity*—either of the heart, or of the judgment—or of both. It is because men either persuade themselves that “that there is no God”—and this conclusion is so great an absurdity, that even the fool dares only to whisper it “in his heart”—or they suppose that he takes no cognizance of human events; that he is too great to be interested in what is passing among men; that he has abandoned the world which he made

to chance ; and that, even if his general providence be admitted, he leaves unregarded the interests of the individual, who may, therefore, slide away unnoticed from the aggregate of society—or they conclude that there is no future state, and that the worst that can happen befalls them here ; from which calamity they may deliver themselves by self-destruction—or they judge of him, rather by their wishes and exigencies, than by the revelation of his character which he has made in his word ; and hope that he will not visit for these things, and that the extremity will excuse the offence—or they boldly set his justice, his power, his laws, and his authority, at defiance ; and as they were not parties to their own being in its grant, they are not bound to wait its close, or they will not obey his mandate to that effect :—to one of these causes, all of which spring from infidelity, must the crime of suicide be traced, whenever it does not originate in insanity. The only exception that can be imagined is, a sudden frenzy, induced by uncontrollable circumstances overpowering reason : but this, if it unseat the reason only for a time, is insanity : if it be a burst of passion, to which the reason yields without being dispossessed of her throne, whatever be the provocation, the result is criminal : because the passions ought to have been so habitually guarded, as in no case, so long as the understanding remains, to gain the supposed ascendancy. I have said, that the several causes already assigned, with the ex-

ception of insanity, either constitutional or temporary, arise from infidelity. For religion asserts the being of God—and Nature establishes the position. Religion maintains the Divine sovereignty, and that the moral government of God extends over all things—and Providence confirms the fact. Religion reveals a future state of rewards and punishments, involving man's responsibility—and Conscience admits, in its hopes, and fears, and premonitions, the doctrine. Religion explains that the Judge eternal is the avenger of guilt, and will try the offender by his own rectitude, and the principles established in the Scriptures, and not by human caprice or infirmity—and Reason recognises a conclusion so consistent. Religion asserts the right, and the exclusive right of Deity, to dispose of man, and to limit the life which he has given—and Justice agrees that a demand so obviously arising out of the relation between the Creator and the creature, cannot be resisted without treason against the eternal Majesty. Suicide, involving the converse of all these propositions, advanced by revelation, supported as they are by nature, Providence, conscience, reason, and justice, must originate in infidelity.

The justification also of this act, attempted to be drawn from the *example* of eminent men in antiquity, and from the opinions of others, among the most distinguished heathen philosophers—induces the inference of doubt upon the subject, if not of suspicion. That which is plainly right, carries its

evidence in itself, and seeks no foreign justification: it leaves the principle to make its own way, and time to demonstrate its purity and propriety. When we begin to hesitate in any point, it is time to abandon it: whatever is doubtful, may be criminal; and we are taught to “abstain from all appearance of evil.” But this is an act more than dubious—conscience startles at it—and examples are sought, not to try the justice of the scruples involuntarily obtruded, but, if possible, to remove them. The examples gathered from antiquity, are far from displaying, in most cases, dignity of character; they consisted then, as now, in a petulant and impatient quarrel with Providence: or in a most unphilosophical predominance of the passions: or in a proud and cold scepticism, which having first chilled the charities of life into apathy, left it with contempt. Devotion to patriotism, or to religion, however mistaken in some cases, must be excepted, as emanating from a better principle; and should be regarded as a sacrifice to duty, real or supposed: which enters into the question of self-preservation especially, and not into the condemnation of suicide: because although these resigned themselves for an object which they considered as paramount to life, in point of obligation as well as value, they did not fall by their own hand, but surrendered themselves to perish—excepting in a few instances, depending upon very extraordinary circumstances. These too are special questions, which must be left to the un-

erring equity of the Judge Eternal. The opinions of the most illustrious men in the heathen world also differed widely upon this subject; and, while some attempted a feeble defence of it, (for the greatest talent must be weak, when it combats against reason and conscience,) others eloquently and forcibly delineated its folly and turpitude. If some were found to allow, many were forward to condemn, with just abhorrence, this infamous practice. Among these, Socrates, Plato, and Cicero, those princes of the ancient philosophers, were pre-eminent. The latter uses the remarkable expression, that "it is as unlawful for a man to withdraw from life without the Divine permission, as for a soldier to quit his post without his general's orders."

It has been said, that some eminent and good men, in modern times, have either attempted or perpetrated this crime. I believe none such can be adduced, except such as were evidently under the decided influence of mental derangement. But it has been maintained, that religion itself, or at least a certain class of religious tenets, has produced a disorganization of intellect, which has either terminated fatally, or evinced a strong propensity to self-destruction: and the name of the excellent and lamented Cowper has been often adduced as an example to make out this serious charge. Whoever has attended accurately and faithfully to facts, will discover, that this great man attempted suicide, before he felt the power, or even made any marked profession of religion:

and this is most strikingly evident from the sketch of his early life, which he has left behind him, as the production of his own pen. No one can read this, his own testimony, without feeling satisfied, that in his attempts at suicide, he was under the powerful and immediate influence of that insanity which it is well known was with him constitutional; and which rendered it necessary in one instance to place him under restraint, and to the last hour of his life, required that he should be observed with the most unslumbering vigilance. Religion, or the class of religious sentiments which he adopted, had nothing more to do with it, than every prominent idea has to do with the mind of an insane person. No class of religious sentiments authorize suicide: yet he was perpetually tormented with the impression that he ought to perpetrate it. Every species of madness fixes upon some one great and prevailing point: and the man is frequently rational on every other subject, but as certainly discovers the state of his mind when you touch that particular feeling. It is clear, also, that in cases of insanity, the thing to which the mind attaches the highest importance, will be probably the point of aberration. From Cowper's first permanent religious impressions, religion was the business of his life; the first, last, great, and only concern. Upon this subject, therefore, would the disease most decidedly rest, and most distinctly disclose itself. The mind will also clothe the disease, whatever may be the subject, in its own

livery. The spirit of Cowper was gentle, and tender—mild and melancholy. He had a heart all susceptibility, and fraught with the purest affections—but an imagination overshadowed with gloom. No wonder, independent of any particular creed, which does not here, at least, appear chargeable with his malady, his religious impressions should be the reflex of his constitutional tendencies. Had his mind been of another order—more ardent, heroic, and imaginative, on the same subject he might—instead of shewing us a personal despair, without the slightest foundation in the principles which he adopted—have surrounded us with scenes of terror, judgment, and majesty, beyond all ordinary conception, as sublime as dreadful ; the effect of the same disordered fancy ; as unreal, and as evidently foreign from the religious doctrines believed, as were the milder and affecting despondencies of Cowper—in the same way borrowing their features from the spirit that conceived them. I have entered further into this instance than I should otherwise have done, because it is one which the enemies of certain religious sentiments delight to select, and to exhibit as the victim of those sentiments : because other cases impartially examined, would terminate in a similar result ; and because the conclusion must be, in every candid judgment, that suicide, or attempts upon human life, have no countenance from any quarter that deserves to be considered either as wise or good—except insanity be the cause.

To return more immediately to the subject—the *cowardice of it* ought to make the *man* blush, even if he relinquish the principles of the christian. He shrinks from a warfare, which others endure with heroic fortitude: he throws down his arms and quits the field, while others make a bold and successful stand against the enemy. Is this true nobility of spirit? What! has the philosopher less energy, or more petulance, than others? That he has a quicker sensibility will not excuse him: for it is supposed to originate in the penetration and rationality of a stronger mind. After sophistry has made out the best case for the self-murderer, he that flies life is a coward: nor is this the whole; to that personal shrinking, which a noble mind would disdain, is added a shameful consequence: the base retreat of the individual is accompanied by wrongs inflicted upon others, who are left to bear the burden. The father who destroys himself, heaps the whole of that calamity, which his act confessed him unable to sustain, upon his wife and family. Are women and children, then, better qualified to support suffering than the man? “O shame, where is thy blush?” He is a coward indeed, who flies from an evil which he entails upon his family, and his relations; those also of the softer sex, and more tender age; with the disgrace superadded of his ignominious retreat from life and its duties—a disgrace which will cleave to them in society, as well as haunt and afflict them in solitude. I can-

not help thinking that the suicide shows as little feeling as courage--as little affection to his family as regard to his God: it is a character so dastardly and selfish, that the only surprise is, it could ever find an advocate, or furnish an apology.

The treason of it against the Divine sovereignty, already suggested, appears in various conclusive particulars. The prerogative of God, to fix the "bounds of our habitation," and appoint our time, is defied. The arrangements of infinite wisdom, and paternal goodness, are arraigned and condemned, by this unnatural act. The moral government of Deity is disregarded and insulted. Whatever can be binding is broken: whatever is decent, becomes outraged. It is treason against *Nature*, and her most powerful law, self-preservation. A law which determines at once the will of the Creator, and the duty of the creature—a law, the universality of which leaves its authority undoubted; and the sanctions of which cannot be slighted with impunity. The meanest insect possesses it in common with man: it is, therefore, no prejudice of human education, but the wise and absolute enactment of the Author of our being. The most insignificant among the animate creation, are fruitful in expedients to preserve that life, without immortality suspended upon it, which the suicide dares to destroy, at the stake of his eternal existence. It is treason against *the social compact*. Society has claims upon the individual, from which he cannot be fairly absolved, without their con-

sent: except by the dispensations of Him, who having formed the bonds at the beginning, has alone a right to loose them at his pleasure. The suicide extinguishes with his life, not only the affections due to his family, but the duties which he owes to his country, and his obligations to mankind at large. It is treason against *the revealed will of God*. His express command is, "Thou shalt do no murder," and it bears no less upon the individual, than upon society: he is no less guilty, who lifts his hand against himself, than he who assassinates his neighbor. He is God's property, not his own—and God's law is absolute. In the spirit of this law, St. Paul arrested the arm of the Philippian jailer, when he had planted his sword at his heart, and said, "Do thyself no harm." Under its influence, Job declared, "All the days of my appointed time will I wait, until my change come." And, in conformity with it, are all the precepts of patience, resignation and submission—all the doctrines relative to the Divine sovereignty, providence, and paternity, with their respective rights—and all the examples of uncomplaining suffering and heroic fortitude, placed before us in the Scriptures.

We cannot, therefore, any longer doubt the guilt of the act, or the misery which it produces—a misery the more certain, inasmuch as the offence affords no space for repentance or prayer—therefore no hope of pardon. It is often instantaneous; and, in the moment of the commission of the crime,

the spirit appears before the judgment-seat, to answer for it. Far be it from me, to limit the Divine mercy : or to say, after the act, if a few lingering hours, or even moments, are granted, what contrition may be wrought in the soul, or what compassion may be exercised by the Deity. But in the sudden departure, even this slender hope is cut off: for he has said that the state in which a man actually dies, is unalterable : “the unjust must be unjust still ; and the filthy, filthy still ;” and if the man die in the act of rebellion, is it possible that he should be treated upon any other principle than that of a rebel ?

SINS OF THE TONGUE.

The most degrading and offensive vice of the tongue is *profanity*. It is absolutely without apology, and it is inseparable from infamy. The highest rank cannot palliate, the lowest cannot excuse it. It prevails, alas ! among all ranks, and to a degree among both sexes. I am not now speaking of that contempt and defiance which the tongue of the infidel sometimes pours forth against the Fountain of his being, and the prescriptions of his word ; but of that most horrible habit of swearing, or taking the name of God in vain, which affords neither pleasure nor profit, while it violates whatever is sacred, and tramples under foot a positive command—“Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain ; for the Lord will not hold

him guiltless that taketh his name in vain." That the higher classes in society should indulge in this degrading vice is most astonishing. The great line of distinction between them and the lower classes, is propriety of language: this marks, more strongly than any other circumstance, superiority of education, culture of mind, and select associations. This distinction they voluntarily abandon, and descend to the vulgar dialect, and dreadful oaths of the uninstructed and the low, for no possible gratification. And even the softer sex, who would shrink from the broad and profane oath, are nevertheless habitually guilty, especially among the higher ranks, and but too universally, of using the name of their Maker with levity, upon every frivolous occasion. "Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord?" Are we to suppose that he has given a commandment without sanctions? or that he will pass over the breach of it? He has said, "for swearing shall the land mourn"—and will he not effect his declaration? "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but his word shall not pass away." How frequently has he cut off the profane in the midst of their sin! and what other dreadful instances of wrath do we wait for, before our boys and our females, our rulers, and our population, will learn to lay aside this shocking, this disgusting, this impious practice, and listen to the warning voice, "Swear not at all?"

Impurity of speech, emphatically called in the word of God "corrupt communication," and "fil-

thiness," is absolutely to be laid aside, as it is most decidedly sentenced and forbidden. "For this know, that no unclean person hath any inheritance in the kingdom of God, and of Christ. Let no man deceive you with vain words ; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye, therefore, partakers with them." Such is the precept—and a little attention to the context will satisfy any inquirer, that the allusion is partly to sensual conduct, but directly to impurity of language, as leading to it by inflaming the passions, and as most odious in itself. The image is exceedingly forcible, and represents it as a moral putrefaction, tainting the lips over which it passes. That must be a bad taste which can relish, as well as an unclean heart which conceives it. It is a miserable substitute for sense and wit ; and a powerful engine of depravity. It is a leprosy of the spirit which shews itself on the tongue. The holy Being, who is of purer eyes than to look upon iniquity, turns from it with abhorrence ; and charges all who profess and call themselves christians—"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth."

Falsehood is an abuse of the tongue which has called forth the most tremendous denunciations. God's own title is, "The Lord God of Truth ;" opposed to which is the appellation of that evil spirit, the enemy of God, of man, and of goodness, who is termed, "the father of lies." "Lying lips

are an abomination to the Lord." "A lying tongue is but for a moment." "What shall be given unto thee, or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue?" "All liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death." This is a vice, therefore, most abhorrent to the nature of Deity; and which shall be assuredly visited with his severest indignation. Nor can we be astonished at this, when we turn from the consideration of the divine character to contemplate its action upon society: the very foundations of which are removed in the destruction of individual confidence. Speech is so far from being a blessing, that in this case it scatters wide and unsparingly the seeds of suspicion, alienation, and ruin. Every species of insincerity, practised by ourselves, or encouraged in others, falls under the censure: for they are numbered among the enemies of God and of all goodness, who "flatter with their tongue."

Slander is a vice of the tongue of the most pernicious quality. Next to inventing falsehood of another, is the crime of admitting it without scruple, and giving it circulation. Some persons seem to live for no other purpose than either "to tell or to hear some new thing:" but, from a moral obliquity, they can see nothing amiable in another, hear nothing favorable, and tell nothing honourable. They visit, converse, I had almost said, worship, for no other end: and the very sanctuary becomes

sometimes, and with some professors, the mart where reputations are bartered, and the altar on which character is sacrificed by looks, by whispers, by insinuations. An adjournment from the pew to the tea-table removes all restraint from the tongue, and gives all scope to the rancorous principle. Those also who will not lie, will defame. If they shrink from calumny, they have skill at *detractiō* : and effect as much in depreciation of character, as others in a more direct attack upon it. Such employment of the tongue is odious in all men—most inexcusable in professors—but detestable beyond all reach of censure in ministers. The wicked, whom God repels from his altar, are charged with this gross offence. “Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit. Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother—thou slanderest thine own mother’s son.”

Allied with this is the spirit of *intermeddling* with the affairs of others, and the never-resting and poisonous tongue of the *tale-bearer*. “Withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house ; and not only idle, but tattlers also, and busy-bodies, speaking things which they ought not.” It is astonishing the mischief that one such person will do in a family, a church, a neighbourhood ; and if he be a political meddler, in a country.

Provocation and violence are among the offences of the tongue. Oh, what fatal effects might have been avoided, in many a desolated family, if its

inmates had respectively learned the great lesson taught by the wise man—"A soft answer turneth away wrath." The husband might have won his wife, the wife retained her husband; the master might have governed and reformed his servant, and the servant have learned to reverence his master; the child would not have been provoked to anger, and would have repaid in the homage of affection, more filial reverence than could be commanded by fear, and extorted by force. But the licentiousness of the tongue causes a breach that cannot be closed; and its tauntings on every side inflict a wound that cannot be healed. Like the barbed arrow, it breaks when it is solicited, and can never be extracted.

Levity appears a venial offence, but it may have a disastrous issue. Trifles in themselves become of serious consequence in their results. Lightness of speech has sometimes terminated fatally. An unguarded expression has led to murder: a sarcasm has implanted in the offended bosom implacable hatred: and general levity of speech both indicates a trifling spirit, and induces pernicious effects upon the moral feeling. It is worthy remark, in what a dark association the apostle places habitual jesting. "Fornication and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not once be named among you, as becometh saints. Neither filthiness"—impure conversation—"nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient." He that ac-

customs himself to habitual levity of speech, encourages a licentiousness of spirit, which will render him familiar with evil: and may, by degrees, initiate him into the darkest mysteries of practical impurity.

GOD'S LAW THE ONLY TRUE STANDARD OF MORALS.

Morals have been a subject of anxious inquiry in all ages. They include the duties which we owe to God, to ourselves, and to each other, arising out of the constitution of our nature, our mutual relations, and the intellectual energies of our being. I have, therefore, unhesitatingly called them *Duties*—and because our object is to inquire after the moral obligations enforced *in the Bible*—they are distinguished as **SCRIPTURE DUTIES**. This is now distinctly stated to escape the necessity of future remark—and to point out clearly, the track which is to be followed.

The ancients distributed morals into three classes: as affecting the individual—family-relations—and jurisprudence. The first they denominated *Ethics*—the second, *Economics*—the third, *Politics*. The term, *Ethics*, was also a general term; because the individual cannot stand alone—he must be necessarily connected with society, from its centre to its circumference: he is himself the cen-

tre, to himself, and as it regards his personal obligations, of the entire circle; and that which affected himself more immediately, became, therefore, generally applied to the whole.

The term, *Ethics*, signifying *manners*, or the personal deportment of the individual, especially towards others, insinuated the influence of the internal moral principle upon the habits and conduct of its possessor. The relation of man to his Creator being demonstrated by the very evidence which led him to the conclusion that there is a God, and obviously inseparable from this earliest concession of the human mind to the existence of a First Cause—and his connexion with his fellow men being as clearly manifested in the organization of society, and the state of constant dependence upon others, of which he cannot but be conscious, from his infancy to his last breath—an inquiry after his corresponding duties, became one of the most-important subjects which could occupy his attention. He gathered his impressions relative to his moral obligations, as well as he could, from the scattered intimations of their character around him, and within him. He deduced them from the harmonies of the visible creation—the varied forms of society—the constitution of his own nature—the testimony of his conscience—and, still more largely, from traditions every where prevailing, although none could trace them to their origin—and making their way by their adaptation to society, their appeals to the judg-

ment of the individual, and their agreement with the universal system of being.

We find, therefore, the wisest of men, in the earliest ages of the history of philosophy, throughout the heathen world, diligently occupied in collecting these moral principles, and in enforcing their obligation upon others. At first, their instructions were scattered and proverbial. A single moral sentiment was conveyed, in a sententious style, as distinguished for its point as for its brevity, that it might be alike felt and remembered. Then followed another detached maxim—important in itself—but having no connexion with that which preceded. After a time it was found necessary to combine these, that they might gather strength from association; and to enter more into the detail of their nature and their reasons, that the hidden wisdom of the sage might be exhibited in a form accessible to public apprehension. To render the principle still more attractive, it was presented in the most popular shape in which it could be clothed—the appeal was made to the eye as well as to the ear—to the external forms of material being, as well as to the intellectual faculties of the mind—to the familiar observations of common life, as well as to the power of thought—to the imagination, as well as to the understanding. Circumstances were invented to show the true character of such as existed—and the visible creation furnished illustrations of abstract principles suggested to the mind: moral truths were

thus conveyed to the heart, through the medium of parables.

The maxims of the seven celebrated Grecian sages furnish an example of the *proverbial* mode of moral instruction, and the method adopted by Pythagoras elucidates the *parabolic*.

In the meanwhile genius and philosophy advanced—assumed a systematic shape—were every day making new discoveries, and diligently laying down fixed laws to regulate and facilitate their ardent inquiries: but the greatest of men were contented to distribute general maxims of moral obligation, in loose and unconnected forms, until that luminary arose in Greece, before whom all contemporary lights “hid their diminished heads.” Socrates considered morals as at once the fountain and the end of true philosophy. To the cultivation of these he directed exclusively all his mighty powers. He collected whatever others had suggested, and supplied from the treasures of his own genius what appeared defective. To find out the spring of moral duty—to apply its principles to all the relations of life, and to enforce its obligations, engaged all his attention. The first he did not fail to trace to the Deity—the latter he delineated with the powerful hand of a master: but when he contemplated his own grand outline, he discovered how much remained to fill it up, which surpassed even his matchless powers—and confessed the necessity of that, for which we this day contend—a *revealed Standard of Morals*.

After the vices and superstitions of the age in which he lived had hurried this great man out of the world, his labours did not die with him. He wrote nothing; but his disciples, Plato and Xenophon, recorded the words which fell from his lips—and with great fidelity preserved to posterity his principles, while they often decorated his simple language with their own eloquence. Morals now began to be regarded as a system; and became, what Socrates had feared, and cautioned his followers against, but too much matters of mere speculation. Lost in the mazes of metaphysical disquisitions, men were more anxious to exhibit and defend the subtilties of their own definitions and distinctions, than to chalk out a plain path for plain men; and to argue upon the origin of moral principles, than to enforce their eternal obligation.

The writers upon this important subject multiplied—and each allowing the existence of moral principle, accounted in various ways for its origin, applying to it standards no less diversified. Some founded it upon *sympathy*—the harmony of mind with mind, and of circumstances with circumstances. Some upon *symmetry*—the adjustment of the parts to the whole—suggesting what is beautiful, fit, and proper. Some upon *utility*—measuring the moral quality by that which was best suited to society—and resolving the question finally into the dangerous principle of *expediency*. Others referred to a *moral sense*—out of which some of the former speculations arose. Others traced the origin

of morals in *relation*—appealed for their regulation and evidence to *conscience*—or rather *consciousness*—conscience being not a separate faculty of the mind, nor an additional sense—but a law incident to all the faculties, and impressed by the wisdom that formed us, upon our entire moral constitution. These adduced finally *responsibility* to enforce the observance of moral duties, which they traced *from* the Deity, as their author, again *to* the Deity, as their end. From our relation to him arose the obligation—and to him must be the responsibility of a relation, which, once admitted, can never be dissolved. And thus, after wandering over the speculations of the human mind, relative to the origin of duties which cannot be denied—we rest at last upon *the will of God* as the basis of all true morality, and the grand rule of all moral duty.

All other imagined bases are defective. Neither reason, nor conscience, could trace distinctly the principle, or guide unerringly its application. Even the voice of nature has ceased to be heard amidst the clamours of superstition—and her instinctive affections have been sacrificed to her fears. “She has given her first-born for her transgression, the fruit of her body for the sin of her soul.” Custom has extinguished her tenderness; and with remorseless cruelty she has been known to expose the new-born infant to death, or to become herself its murderer. Conscience has yielded to habit and to interest. It is capable of cultivation: it is also capable of becoming demoralized. It may be

rendered callous—it may be silenced—it may be perverted—it may be darkened, as well as defiled. And in vain shall we then watch for the impulses of sympathy, or hope to perceive moral symmetry:—the beauty of virtue will not attract—the deformity of vice will not terrify—we dare not trust the actions of such a man to the influence of the harmonies of society—or confide to him the decision of what is generally useful. He will sacrifice all utility to expediency, and find it expedient to secure his own interest, or that which he considers such, at the expense of the interests of others; his heart will grow cold, selfish, and contracted, and morals will be dried up in their bosom-spring. Dr. Paley, who so unhappily, at least in my judgment, introduced the dangerous doctrine of expediency, into his masterly system of Moral Philosophy, finds at last no rest for the sole of his foot, but *in the will of God*, and reposes safely his moral system there.

PROPHECY.

THE BIBLE, A CLASSIC:

IMAGINE to yourselves a number of men with minds divested of prejudice, opening the sacred volume, to read it with care and with attention. Such is its variety, and such its beauty, that it will interest each of them in his own peculiar way: but to some it will appear infinitely more impor-

tant than to others. The SCHOLAR will find in it some of the most sublime specimens of eastern composition. The ANTIQUARIAN will prize precious fragments, snatched from the destroying hand of time, rescued from barbarous pillage, surviving the ruins of empires, and transmitted to the present age, while a thousand other works of later date have been consigned to oblivion. The POET will meet here bold and striking images, vivid and impressive figures of speech, lofty and magnificent descriptions, which he may look for in vain among the first of the Greek and Roman classics. Here the SPECULATIST may discern the most curious and sublime truths brought down to the standard of the plainest understanding ; a system elevated beyond the utmost stretch of human comprehension, finding its way to the human heart : mysterious and unsearchable points rendered familiar and intelligible : a wide and inviting field opened for the exertion of every mental faculty. The MAN OF TASTE AND OF FEELING, will be gratified by the exhibition which is made of manly eloquence, of exquisite sensibility, of unaffected sentiment, of true refinement. The LOVER OF HISTORY will discover authentic records of the most remote and the most interesting events, written with a noble simplicity, and possessing the utmost perspicuity. Departed generations are recalled and return, with their manners and customs. The lives and characters of the great and the good are drawn with fidelity and with impartiality. Sometimes he will

be presented with the *biography of individuals*. He will see a great mind encountering a variety of circumstances, struggling with adversity, or withstanding the more dangerous insinuations of prosperity. In every scene he will be able to pierce his very bosom; and in life or in death, the recesses of his heart are alike laid open. Every sphere of human life is accessible; and the Prince, the Lawgiver, and the Shepherd, present themselves in their turn. Sometimes he will be surrounded by *domestic scenes*; and will sit down in the bosom of a family. He will witness their divisions and their reconciliations, their failings, and their excellencies, their joys and their sufferings—in a word, he will become one of them. Sometimes the concerns of *a nation* will burst upon his imagination. He will be made acquainted with the sources of dominion, the windings of power, and the hidden springs of national decay. Thus also the STATESMAN will be interested. He may learn many a lesson of wisdom, and draw many a wholesome truth, from these pages. The best and wisest legislators have made the code of laws relating both to government and morality, contained in this volume, the standard by which their own constitution has been framed: nor have they deviated from this model without manifest disadvantage; except indeed when the unavoidable changes of customs and of manners, and the dissimilarity of countries and of climes, have required alterations. To the PHILOSOPHER the secret springs of the

human heart will be laid open. An acquaintance with men and things, beyond the sphere of human investigation, is displayed here. The movements of the mind, the influence of the passions, every rude and every tender emotion, is uncovered before him and submitted to his penetration. THOSE THAT ADMIRE THE MARVELLOUS may also have their taste gratified, and that not at the expense of truth. Unparalleled wonders are narrated. They bear no marks of fiction: but they carry irresistible features of veracity. They are related with simplicity; and are confirmed abundantly by internal, and by external evidences. We are producing in their order some of the singular events which abound here. There are both miracles and prophecies: and, to impress the heart the more, the reader is *himself* interested in them. But what are the emotions with which the different characters, whom we have enumerated, will consult this volume, to the feelings with which THE CHRISTIAN will read it? Their taste is gratified; but his wants are supplied. Their imagination is fired, and their judgment is informed; but his heart is warmed, and his mind is relieved. To them the throne of God may be a seat of terror; to him it is a throne of grace. A mind at ease seeks entertainment; a wounded spirit pants for repose. The one may consult this volume from curiosity, or, at best, for instruction; the other will read it for his life—his present peace, and his future happiness, alike depend upon what he finds here. It is with

the feelings, the views, and the advantage of this last character, that we earnestly desire you should examine the Scriptures.

CLOSE OF LIFE.

THE closing scenes of every man's life are awful and impressive. When we stand by the side of a dying bed, lessons which are feebly conceived, and wholly disregarded at another time, are taught to perfection, and force their way to the heart in defiance of human levity. Here we see the man resigning the several perfections which once elated him with pride, and laying down his boasted excellencies. Here the strong man is deprived of his strength, and the rich man is stripped of his riches. This is the end of all flesh. The attainments of the scholar, and the wisdom of the wise, cease with the breath departing from the nostrils. The career of glory terminates in the vale of mortality: its lustre is extinguished in the shadow of death: and the hero yields to a stronger arm than his own. Here the dreams of a youthful imagination are broken, and the delusive enchantments of life vanish. Here the great and the gay discover how worthless, and how inconsiderable is the sum total of earthly good: and a true estimate of the present transitory existence is given. "It is better to go into the house of mourning, than to go into the house of feasting:" because the one

strengthens the deceptions of time, and the other dissolves them. Let your hearts be serious this night : for that most interesting and useful of all scenes is painted before you in solemn colours—the close of a great and useful life.

There is a mournful gratification in the melancholy duty of following our departed friends to their last earthly retreat—the grave. It is in obedience to the voice of nature issuing from their very sepulchres, to which also our own hearts are responsive, that we go and see where they have laid them. Fashion has suppressed these strong emotions, and countermanded at once the impulse of nature, the voice of religion, and the custom of thousands of successive generations. When Abraham was to be laid in the grave, the office devolved upon his two sons, Isaac and Ishmael. Rispah is found watching the bodies of her slaughtered children by day and by night, till her interposition ceased only because it became useless through the resistless and consuming hand of time. The sisters of Lazarus were not afraid of the grave of their brother. The mother of Jesus had as fine and as acute feelings as the high-born and the high-bred females, who from excess of affectation (for it is not sensibility) abandon their dwelling the moment death enters it : yet she was found at the foot of the cross, and did not shrink from the scene of trial, while there remained a single maternal duty to fulfil. The family of Jacob are also seen collected around his couch, listening to his words,

and watching his countenance, till the scene is closed by death.

The voice of God calling away the spirit from its present habitation, sounds in the ears of one man as the death-warrant of all his hopes, all his pleasures, all his schemes, all his peace: to another it will be the pledge of deliverance, the shout of triumph, the seal of immortality. When it is said—"the hour is come"—one man shudders; horror and dismay thrill through all his soul; the blood curdles in his veins; he sickens with apprehension; another feels exultation quicken the palpitations of his heart; joy sparkles in his eyes; expectation sits upon his countenance; hope springs forward on the wings of triumphant anticipation. One man says, 'Behold I die!—Farewell, my possessions and my honours! Farewell, my my children and servants! Farewell, my hopes and my schemes, my pleasures and my felicity! How terrible, O Death, is thy approach, and how dreadful are thy consequences! This world fades from my eyes, and how fearful are the features of eternity! I am leaving my gods, and there is none to deliver! I see before me the bar of Jesus Christ; but who may abide the day of his coming, and who shall stand when he appeareth? I have refused his friendship; and can I expect his smile? I have slighted his love; and can I receive his approbation? I have consented to live without him, and now he leaves me to die without him—O for a shelter from his indignation!'—Another looks with a calm and

bright eye upon the grave, and says, 'I must shortly put off this tabernacle ! Welcome, death ; welcome, glory ! Farewell, years of misery and of sin ! Farewell, world of sorrow and of vanity ! Farewell, for a season, my companions in tribulation ! I go to my Father and to your Father ; to my God and to your God. Hail, ye scenes of approaching and unfading felicity. Hail, death, the messenger of peace, the herald of immortality—

“ Cease, fond nature, cease thy strife,
And let me languish into life ! ”

Thus differently do men think, and speak, and feel upon the same subject : but these different views of death must arise from opposite principles ; and there doubtless exists a powerful reason why he is to one man “ the king of terrors,” and to another “ an angel of light.” It is in connection with the sufferings and the atonement of our blessed Lord alone, that death loses his sting. “ Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same ; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil ; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”

DEATH OF JACOB.

There are certain great principles in our nature which discover themselves in the very article of death ; and among these is the well-known pro-

pensity which we feel to be anxious respecting the rites of sepulture. We are not satisfied with having enjoyed the converse of those whom we loved while they were yet alive, but we wish to repose by them when dead. It is our last desire that our bones should lie by their bones; and that our dust should mingle with their dust. It is the last earthly thing that occupies our attention. Thus was it with Jacob: and that he regarded it with no common solicitude, is evident from the reiterated charge, and from the particular description of the spot again and again repeated. Recognize in the dying patriarch your own feelings, and learn that he is "flesh of your flesh." See, how strongly nature lives with him! He has done with the things of time. They attract, they torment him no more. His earthly career hastens to a close. He is breathing the last sigh. One thought, and only one is stolen from heaven, and it hovers over the dust of his departed family. Lay the map of the world before him—he regards not its empires—his eye glides over them, in search of another object, it fixes upon a little obscure field, and there he buries his remaining earthly wishes. Remove that spot, and the whole globe is nothing to him: it excites no interest, it retains no further tie upon him. There his last reflections linger, till they are recalled to the skies. "There," said he, "they buried Abraham, and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac, and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah." With feelings something akin to these,

the Christian sends his thoughts to Calvary, and his affections linger upon the sacred mount with mournful delight, while he reflects, "There they crucified him."

But the bonds of nature could no longer hold a spirit so prepared for heaven. The last wish was expressed ; the last struggle was felt ; and he fled to enjoy the immediate presence of God, and to join the society of those, whom, living, he loved, and dying, he fondly remembered!—"Let me die the death of the righteous ; and let my last end be like his."

THE BAD MAN IN SOLITUDE.

It is night. The sun enlightens another hemisphere. The moon leads forth the hosts of heaven : her beams tremble on the water ; and her testimony to the power and wisdom of God is given in silence. All nature sleeps. The murmur of merchandise ceases. The noise of business, and the voice of riot, are hushed. The gates of the city are closed. Man has resigned his cares and his pleasures to temporary oblivion : his senses are locked up in repose : and the image of death is impressed on his countenance. All sleep, but the wicked prophet. Avarice permits him not to close his eyes : or if slumber surprise him, it cannot sooth him into forgetfulness. His imagination is at work upon the materials of the day. He sees

the princes of Moab again opening their treasures, and pouring them forth at his feet. He is transported to the court of the monarch himself, and receives robes of distinction, and titles of dignity. He grasps the gold which he pursues; and curses the people against whom he is employed. But while his fancy is thus engaged, a voice is heard which chases these visions, which agitates and oppresses him, which raises his hair with terror, and rouses him from his guilty dreams. It is the voice of God: and it addresses him in terms of authority which will admit no subterfuges. "And God said, what men are these with thee?" O wretched man, thine enemy hath found thee! and he asks not for information, but to condemn thee out of thine own mouth! Unable to deceive, he is compelled to declare all, and the truth is circumstantially related. That which he pretended to the embassy of Moab and Midian to seek, he finds unsought and undesired. The will of God is announced to him, in a positive prohibition—"Thou shalt *not* go!" This sentence disperses all his anticipations of distinction, and all his hopes of gain.

We may easily imagine with what feelings he would pass the remainder of the night. After such a visit darkness and solitude would be terrible to him: repose was impossible: and he would wish with impatience to see the "eyelids of the morning" unclosed. But the first ray of light that appeared would renew his anguish; and the neces-

sity of announcing his disappointment cover him with confusion. So soon as it was day he dismissed the messengers to bear an account of the divine prohibition to their master. As they only said to the King, "Balaam refuseth to come with us," it was natural that he should conclude from the complexion of the enchanter's character, that he did not think the proposals of Balak sufficiently liberal. Under this impression a second embassy was dispatched, composed of persons yet more noble, with a message couched in terms still more urgent, and with an unlimited prospect of recompense. He was solicited to name his own conditions; and the king said by his messengers, "I will do whatsoever thou sayest unto me."

Flattering terms!—but the recollection of the night-vision still haunts the conscience of Balaam. For a moment, a purer principle than that which was the grand spring of his usual operations, acquires the ascendancy; and he said, "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more." Happy had it been for him, if this principle had continued to prevail; if his intercourse with the enemies of God had here ceased; and if the love of money had perished under the conviction of his allegiance to his Maker. But the impression was momentary. The balance had all along leaned on the side of the world: the finger of God touched it, and the scale preponde-

rated for the instant in favour of heaven ; but no sooner was the propelling force withdrawn, than the beam turned, and it fell back to its original declination. Well has it been said, “the *love* of money is the root of all evil.” Every law is broken, every duty neglected, every sacred obligation violated, to gratify its insatiable cravings. Other vices are temporary—the strongest passions are controlled, subdued, and destroyed by time. Other sins are limited to certain seasons of life, and frequently lose their force and influence as the man grows older. The fire which consumes the young, has a boundary placed to its raging, and is extinguished by age. Follies become corrected by experience : and wisdom is taught by the “multitude of days.” But avarice cleaves closer to the heart as years advance : its influence is increased by time : it lives amid the snows of life, when every emotion besides itself is frozen ; and it quickens the pulsations of a heart dead to every other passion. The canker that devoured the strength of the youth, and chased the bloom of his cheek, eats into the tranquillity of age, and adds wrinkles of care to the traces drawn upon the countenance by the hand of time.

Again the heart of Balaam gives way ; and he tampers with temptation till it destroys him. The positive prohibition which he had received is neglected ; and he vainly hopes a repeal of the divine commandment. Night returns : the sun is faithful to his going down ; and the very advances of

the evening ought to have been a check to "the madness of the prophet." Deaf as he was to the still voice of nature, declaring the divine immutability! could he hope a revolution in his purpose who gives the day and the night in remembrance of a promise once pronounced? But avarice appears in this instance to have veiled even his understanding. A second visit from God, however, grants him permission to go! But, what a permission! the prohibition was an act of friendship; the permission is an act of indignation. The prohibition was evidently conducive to his safety: the permission is as evidently given him at his peril. It resembles the ease allowed to Ephraim—"He is joined to idols, *let him alone.*" Balaam is found perverse, and he is given over to his own heart's lusts. The spirit of the language is—"Go—and take the consequences; but although you carry your point here—I will yet be obeyed—the word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do." Chasten me, O God, according to thy wisdom: control my passions, and refuse my desires, whenever they displease thee, and in whatever way shall seem good in thy sight—but never curse me with such a permission, nor resign me to the dominion of my own devices.

Behold him eager to set out on this perilous journey. He rises early in the morning; and exhibits an alacrity seldom manifested by those who profess to obey nobler principles. The princes of Moab advance before him to apprise the king of

the success of their mission, and to prepare the court for his approach. Balaam is left to pursue his way unattended, except by his two servants—is left to solitude and meditation. I do not envy him his situation. Retirement is desirable only when a man is in alliance with Heaven, and at peace with his own conscience.

PROPHECY DEPENDENT ON PROVIDENCE FOR ILLUSTRATION.

With respect to *providence*, we know that the ways of God are perfect, but our comprehension of them is limited. It is yet night with us, and will continue so till we quit the present state of being. Our brightest moments, are but as the dawn of the morning, when cloud and mist rest upon the landscape, and every object seen at all, is discerned only darkly and uncertainly. Man is acting irrationally when he attempts to bring down all the operations of an infinite mind to his standard. All that he comprehends of the plans of God, is harmonious and wise: his conclusion ought to be, when he no longer comprehends them perfectly, that the defect is in himself and not in the thing contemplated: but unhappily the pride of his heart leads him to another and a false conclusion that what his limited capacity cannot comprehend, is in itself incomprehensible. The fact only is, that it is so to *him*: but this involves nothing respecting the thing itself, and proves nothing except that

it is of a higher order than his own. The same thing may be remarked with respect to *prophecy*. Some parts of the predictions before us, are a little obscure in themselves, and are made more so by commentators. Every man conjectures, if he can do nothing else: and thus hypothesis is heaped upon hypothesis, because the interpreter will aim at originality, till amidst much learning and ingenuity, the very existence and purport of the text vanish out of sight. In the few verses which remain to be considered, we shall not follow expositors through all their intricacies, but at once shew what appears to us the natural direction of the words. Where we cannot trace the fulfilment of them, we shall confess our inability, entreating you to keep in mind what we have now promised. Prophecy must be explained by Providence, to be clearly understood. When, therefore, it relates to remote events the very remembrance of which has perished, and to transactions the record of which is lost, the prediction of necessity becomes obscure: we have no longer the medium through which it might be interpreted: the defect is not in the prediction which clearly related to positive events; but in the absence of the history which could have rendered it luminous. Having established this, we grant nothing to infidelity, in granting that the prediction *is* obscure; since it is *not* so in *itself*, but *appears* so to *us*, because of the scantiness of our information on the subjects to which it refers. We shall therefore never shrink from confessing

that we do not perceive its meaning, where we cannot trace its relation to events connected with it, but which the hand of time has blotted out from the records of this world.

CHARACTER OF BALAAM IMPROVED.

He had sacrificed to the king of Moab, his conscience, his integrity, his peace of mind, and his future happiness: yet because he could not sacrifice Israel also (which in truth Balak knew he would willingly have done had not a stronger arm restrained him) he was sent home in disgrace, proscribed as an offender, and urged to flee on peril of stronger evidences of indignation on part of the offended monarch. Not only was he thus dismissed, unrewarded and insulted: but his employer aggravated his cruel disappointment, by taunting him with what he designed to have done for him. O my friend! if indeed you are wasting your best days, and sacrificing your noblest powers in the service of the world and of sin—turn again and look once more at Balaam, with melancholy steps retracing his journey back to the mountains of the east, unattended and unhonoured! Not such a return had he anticipated, when he set out accompanied by the princes of Moab, with the promise of a reward as boundless as his ambition! See then the picture of your own destination! In the evening of life, when you expect from the

world the promised recompense ; you will be left to lay your hoary head upon a pillow of thorns ; and find too late, that “the wages of sin is death ;” and that the smiles of the world are destruction. Descending into the vale of years, you shall “look for peace, but find despair, companion of your way !”

Balaam is now no more ! He is as though he had never been, so far as himself is concerned ! What does it now avail him, that the renown of his talents reached the court of Moab, from the retirement of the mountains of the East ? What does it avail him, that a monarch sought his assistance, and that a king became a suppliant to him ? And who, or what, is Balak ? All his wealth bestowed upon the unhappy man who preferred his friendship to the friendship of God, had he kept his promise to its widest extent, could not now compensate the wretched but illustrious prophet of Mesopotamia ! His honours—his riches—have perished with him : his guilt—his infamy remain forever !

So shall perish all thine enemies, O Lord ! Christian, do not envy them their transient renown. Hold on thy way, through the lowly, sequestered vale of life rejoicing ! Advance softly and silently—obscure and unnoticed to heaven ! There is thy life, thy renown, thy record, thy recompense ! The sword of justice quivers over the head of guilty greatness. God says, to them in the very midst of their hopes—“Return, ye children of men”—and see ! their countenances change, and they

“go to their place.” The voice of mortality also addresses you : but the voice of Jesus mingles with the notes of death. He calls you home. “Arise,” he says, “enter into the joy of thy Lord!”

GOD, THE SUPREME RULER.

National judgments are the punishment of national sins : and in the history of empires we see still present retributions, of so awful and impressive a nature, as to silence, in an hour of calm reflection, the doubts which scepticism has laboured to raise, respecting the superintendence of providence, and which extort from the lip of conviction, “Verily there is a God that ruleth in the earth.” In the desolations which lay waste the fairest parts of the globe, we are sometimes compelled to see the hand of God lifted up : but who lays these things to heart ? Man always is prone to stop short at second causes. He seldom regards more than the instrument. He is satisfied with deploring the effect. We are carried beyond these inferior considerations in the passage before us. When it represents an enemy thundering at the gates of Jerusalem, it does not say, that they were attracted by the wealth, or envious of the greatness, of the Jews : that they came to punish acts of cruel aggression, or the infringement of treaties : that the thirst of insatiable ambition prevailed, even when no such provocations were given : because al-

though all these were causes, they were only subordinate. Sin made God the enemy of the nation. And although the invading adversaries were their immediate scourge, they were only instrumental. The Agent is far superior. The favor of God is the defence of a country: not their monarchs and counsellors: not their treaties and alliances: not their chariots and horses: not their fortifications and navies—these are usually the *means* employed to support the existence and the prosperity of a country—but security rises from an higher source, and is preserved by divine and constant superintendence.

WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

The Jews rejected, but do you receive him? The prophets call him the desire of all nations; and in himself he is an object infinitely desirable. What are the traits of character which you have been accustomed to admire and love? Are they those which alone stamp dignity upon human nature, and best distinguish man from the brute creation? Are they those emanations of Deity which sin extinguished at the fall, and which the transactions of Calvary restored in all their former excellence—in all their pristine beauty—in all their primeval splendour—in all their ancient grandeur and majesty? Do you indeed venerate purity of character, benevolence of life, holiness of conversation, tenderness of heart? Ah, see them most conspic-

uous, most pre-eminent, most permanent, in the object now presented to your contemplation. Is your heart formed for friendship? Are you cast in the mould of social affections? Do you love the domestic circle? Do you prize above the world's wealth, a faithful bosom upon which you may repose your head: a faithful ear into which you may pour your feelings: a faithful heart, which will throb with your anxieties, and exult in your joys? Behold here, "a friend that loveth at all times—a brother born for adversity—a friend that sticketh closer than a brother;" and "in all our afflictions he was afflicted."

"He in the days of feeble flesh,
Pour'd out his cries and tears;
And in his measure feels afresh
What every member bears!"

Are you a sinner overwhelmed with the sad conviction of guilt and of misery? Is it all fear without and conflict within? Does your conscience testify against you, and your heart condemn you? Does the sentence of impartial justice against all transgression roll in thunder over your head? Look up, trembling spirit! The voice of Jesus can hush this tempest. The smiles of his face will disperse these threatening clouds. Tranquillity shall break through them, and shine once more upon thy troubled heart. Hope, and faith, and joy, shall supplant fear, and unbelief, and anguish when he says, "Go in peace, thy sins are forgiven thee!"

EVERY THING CONNECTED WITH THIS
WORLD IS LOCAL AND TEMPORARY.

Every thing connected with this world is local and temporary. The empires which human co-operation has raised, are continually changing; the sceptre is passing from hand to hand; and the balance of power among the nations is perpetually shifting. The busy, ardent countenance of every man whom we meet, discovers that he is, or thinks that he is, of some importance. But so his fathers thought before him; and they are forgotten; so his children shall think after him, when he sleeps in the dust, and all his talents, his activity, and his services, are buried with him. "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh." We trample the dust of our ancestors under our feet, without reflecting that it once lived, and without recollecting that we also shall be mingled with the clods of the valley.

Religious dispensations are changing also. We see Aaron, God's high priest, going up to the top of Mount Hor, and laying down his robes and his life together. The Son descends, arrayed in his Father's vestments, to fill his place for a season; and then to bequeath the priestly raiment, and the priestly office, to his successor. The apostle looks back upon the long train, who presided first in the tabernacle, and then in the temple, and says—"these were not suffered to continue by reason of death." When this order of things was set aside, and the simplicity of the gospel supplanted the

pomp of Judaism, the same vicissitudes marked the new dispensation ; and upon Christian temples we see inscribed the same characters of mutability. The apostles followed the prophets to the land of silence. Their testimony was taken up by pastors and teachers ; and God has maintained, without interruption, a standing ministry. These have been called away, every man in his order, to resign their employment, and to give an account of their stewardship. The distribution of ordinances now rests with us, upon whom the care of the churches devolves in the present day, and who wait the signal to depart, and to resign our office to others. We see your countenances change from sabbath to sabbath, as we address you in our respective congregations. We remember that other feet have stood in our pulpits, and that other voices have sounded within the walls which encircle our worshipping assemblies. Every year some of our people drop around us ; we perceive the grave opening at our own feet, and death ready to seal our lips, when we shall have pronounced the messages which God commands us to deliver. And not only do *we* change, but the whole creation fades around us. The heavens are waxing old. The foundations of the earth are decaying. The pillars which prop universal nature bend with age, tremble under the pressure of years, and appear ready to sink beneath the additional weight which time imposes. He alone remains unchanged who created them ; and he is saying, " Behold I make all things new !"

GOD'S GRAND EPOCHS.

When God speaks of time, he usually speaks of it as a whole, without regarding its little divisions; for it is less in the scale of his eternity, than a moment is to all its accumulated ages, from its commencement to its consummation. There are four or five epochs in time which he sometimes condescends to fix as the measurement of his providence and purposes. The day when he set the stream of existence flowing: when "the morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy:" when a beautiful and harmonious creation emerged from the darkness and discord of chaos. The day when willing to shew his "wrath, and to make his power known," he broke up "the fountains of the deep," and opened "the windows of heaven," and destroyed the earth which he had made, and with it the rebels who had grieved his Spirit; and all flesh died—a remnant excepted, amounting only to "eight souls," whom he preserved unhurt amidst this universal overthrow. The day, when his only-begotten Son veiled his uncreated glory in human flesh, and tabernacled with men, and died "the just for the unjust," that he might bring us to God. The day, when "the mountain of the Lord's House shall be exalted above every high hill, and the nations shall flow unto it:" when the Jew shall stretch forth his hand to Messiah the Prince, and say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord;" when

Jehovah will “set his King upon his holy hill of Zion,” and give him “the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession.” The day, when the angel shall “stand upon the sea, and upon the earth, and lift up his hand to heaven, and swear by him that liveth forever and ever—that there shall be time no longer.” These are the epochs which God fixes, as the measurement of his time ; and not the reigns of Ahasuerus, and Alexander, and Cæsar, and the long succession of monarchs, from Nimrod to the last who shall sit upon a throne. These are all inferior events swallowed up and unnoticed in divine calculation.

PROVIDENCE.

There is not a doctrine more absurd in itself, or more pernicious to the interests of mankind, than the doctrine of chance. It is absurd to imagine that God should create the world and abandon the government of it : that he should form beings wholly and entirely dependent upon himself, and then withdraw his support from them. It is pernicious to human morals, and to human society, to insinuate that God has no superintendence over the affairs of men, and that they have no responsibility to him. It is a degrading representation of the Deity to assert, that, supremely happy in himself, he disregards the felicity of his creatures ; and that infinitely secure, he leaves them alone on the

troubled deeps of life, tossed from wave to wave, the sport of adverse and ungovernable winds. It is not true. He abandons not the little ark that contains the human race, as it floats upon a tempestuous sea. He did not launch yonder worlds with an omnipotent arm, till he had prescribed their orbits with infinite skill. The doctrine of divine superintendence stimulates exertion. A man labours with a spirit proportionate to his expectation of success. If the issue be left to chance, he may well despair : but if it be in the hands of providence, which will undoubtedly produce the end best adapted to his interests, he has an object before him of unspeakable moment, and he will pursue the use of the means with increasing vigour. Scripture Prophecy once established, is a decisive and resistless demonstration of the existence, the agency, and the wisdom of divine providence.

THE ENSLAVED AFRICAN.

Snatched from his country, separated from his wife and his children, compressed into a space almost too narrow for the springs of existence to play as he crosses the waves that waft him forever from every object that communicated a pulse of joy to his heart, he is dragged to a foreign market as a beast of burden, and sold to suffer and to sustain all the horrors of slavery. In vain he turns his eyes and stretches his hands towards the shores of his native land which have disappeared ; in vain

he calls upon his family, or implores pity from his taskmasters ; the winds scatter his lamentations, and the insensible ocean drinks his tears. While he labours under the scorching noon, or is chilled by the damps of the night, nothing is left to alleviate the bitterness of captivity. He has no wife whose affectionate bosom would prove a pillar to his throbbing head ; no child to lisp his name ; no parent to wipe away the tear half-suppressed from his swollen eyes. The scourge is the recompense of his toil ; and the blood streaming down his sides ploughed by the hand of violence, is the wages of his hard bondage. Hope, that lightens anguish, that sweetens care, that heals the wounds of the heart, the only remaining consolation of the miserable, and that assists even the prisoner to carry his fetters—Hope has stretched her wings and fled from the fields nourished by human blood, the blood of Africa's enslaved sons. He casts many a gloomy look to the close of that life, which is to him trouble and anguish. He has not even the consolation of reflecting that he shall lay his head upon the turf that hides his ancestors, and repose by the side of his parents : an idea precious to nature in her wildest, darkest, most uncultivated state ; and which civilized nations have never consented to relinquish. He winds up all his mental powers against the weakness of complaint ; he sheds no tears but in secret ; and despair breaks his heart. Nature has taught him that in the grave “the wicked cease from troubling and the

weary are at rest"—and he anticipates death as the only friend which oppression has left him. And who are his tyrants? The descendants of Shem and of Japheth—polished Europe. By what principles of justice is Europe the scourge of Africa? By what right is the liberty of that man infringed and destroyed? We claim a right to the air which we breathe; and to the general, unrestricted bounties of nature; and he has with us this common right. Britain concentrates all her forces, and awakens her energies along all her shores—her sons are willing to die for the cause of freedom; and this queen of the nations has set a noble example to every other empire, in breaking her yoke from the neck of Africa. Ah, let it not be said, he has no feeling—Look upon his countenance, is it not furrowed by tears springing from a sense of sorrow and of injury? His heart once beat with parental transport. The hut was precious to him which sheltered his children. He wept with his family when they wept, and rejoiced when they rejoiced. What is there in the continent scorched by the sun's vertical rays that should so essentially alter man? Pierce that arm—you will find blood circulating through its veins and arteries like your own. His limbs are as pliant, and his heart as warm. Do not call him a barbarian. Deprived of all his rights, with all his consolations destroyed before his eyes, are we to wonder that mere nature should be sullen and revengeful? Are not those the savages who would not have

pity, when they saw the tears of their brother? and who have reduced him to the situation, which excites his fury, and fires his malice?

FALSE ESTIMATES OF CHARACTER.

We usually form our judgment of actions, from their splendour rather than from their utility. We are apt to be dazzled by magnificence of appearance, without inquiring after the intrinsic value of the object admired: and we are guided by adventitious and imposing circumstances, in forming our decisions upon any subject, more frequently, than by its native dignity and importance. In judging of human characters, we are necessarily compelled to reason upon that which is external: to gather motives from actions, to rise from effects to causes, and from conduct to argue principles. Unable to read the heart, or to penetrate the veil that covers the latent but powerful springs of human operation, we know others only as they seem, not as they are. But we carry this principle too frequently beyond necessity. When we might have opportunity of deciding upon something more satisfactory than mere appearance, we neither seek nor embrace the occasion: we rather court that which accommodates itself to the senses, to the passions, even to our infirmities, than that which is addressed to the reason, to the understanding and to the conscience. The eye, in a flower garden, overlooks the violet, and is arrested by the tulip:

because the one courts us with all the luxuriance of lovely and dazzling colours, and the other is modestly satisfied with diffusing fragrance around it, without pressing to be seen. Worth seldom asks a witness of its excellence, and often therefore loses its just applause. Those actions which attract universal notice, and succeed in obtaining general admiration, not merely have frequently little intrinsic value, but are little more than splendid vices. In the estimation of God, he, whom the world almost worship as a Saviour, is found a destroyer. We regard persons and things through the medium of prejudice arising from our situation in respect of them; could we shift our station, or the medium through which we behold them, we should generally find the excellencies or defects ascribed to them, by the partialities of our sentiments of regard or of aversion, magnified beyond all just proportion, and all real existence. Thus the man whom one nation regards as an object all-glorious, is to another inexpressibly vile: both speak and judge according to their interest, and their particular relation to him: both are partly right and partly wrong: he has good and bad qualities—but in a serious point of view, by parties altogether unconcerned, if such can be, a conqueror must of necessity be a curse: because he depresses one class of his brethren of mankind as much as he elevates unduly another. The orb which rises upon one quarter of the globe as a Sun, blasts the other as a meteor; the beams which af-

ford to one favoured spot vitality and nutrition, shed upon the rest blight and mortality. Yet these are the objects that excite attention, and command superior respect!—On the contrary, a life of usefulness terminating in a death of ignominy—a Saviour, wearing the form of a servant—tabernacled almost unknown among us—was noticed only to be persecuted, and closed the scene of his sufferings amidst the brutal shouts of unfeeling multitudes, whose peace was purchased by his agonies!

THE SHORT-SIGHTEDNESS OF MAN CONTRASTED WITH THE PERFECTION OF GOD.

THERE is no truth capable of elucidation more general and complete, than that it is impossible to judge the future with accuracy from the features of the present. Time and mortality destroy human calculations, deride man's boasted prescience, and punish his presumptuous reliance upon futurity.

Sometimes the foundation of a building is laid wide and deep: the materials used are firm and good: the ground is well chosen: the workmen are numerous: the builder is skilful: the plan is correct: the design is magnificent: and yet the topstone is never brought forth, and the structure is never finished. Death calls the master away to another house: or adversity palsies his arm, dries up his resources, and changes his prospects. That which was planned for a palace, stands a

ruin. The purposed hall of pleasure, becomes the seat of silent desolation. The work which was designed to extort admiration from the eye of envy itself, calls forth a sigh of pity and of regret from the bosom of every passenger. The vision which presented itself to the departed owner of this work, was very unlike this sad picture. Providence refused to fill up the outline which human presumption had drawn; and the event has demonstrated, that he who flattered himself with the completion of his magnificent design, was no prophet.

Sometimes a man sets out upon a journey, with every reasonable prospect of success in his schemes and of restoration to his family: which expectation hope does not fail to stamp with the currency of certainty. But sickness seizes him by the way; and mortality meets him on his journey. He is hurried to that land, from whose "bourne no traveller returns." He forgot to add, "if God will," at the foot of all his plans, and his family are left to sigh over the neglected warning—"Ye know not what shall be on the morrow."

Sometimes in a family it is predicted that such a boy will be the honour and the stay of his parents' old age. He is diligent, affectionate, and obedient: he has every desirable quality. The calculation is made too soon. Full many a blossom, that expanded its bosom to the spring, falls from the tree, and leaves no fruit behind it. He is ensnared by temptation. He falls the victim of sin

and misery ; and the premature grave that opens to receive him, closes upon the hope, the pride, the happiness of his fond parents, forever ! Again, others are marked as a future curse. Froward, untractable, and insolent, they seem formed only to pierce the bosom that nourished them. But some gentle providence rouses, and the hand of God changes them. Like the disobedient son in the gospel, they say, "I will not" to the voice of parental solicitation, and in some happier moment repent, and obey the command which they opposed. Human sagacity is frustrated ; and human penetration deceived. The first is made last, and the last becomes first.

The little, therefore, that man knows is confined to the present ; and that little is slowly acquired. The standard of our powers is not reached at once. The child advances by tardy degrees to the maturity of his judgment ; and by the aid of much culture attains at length the "fulness of the stature" of his mind. Every day adds some stroke to the painting : widens and swells the original outline : till years give harmony, consistency, and beauty to the whole piece. Our conceptions are always rude at first ; and are moulded into shape, or polished into splendour by the hand of time. We find occasion often to alter our original plan ; often to deviate from it ; often to abandon the first idea altogether. The most simple device of art required time to bring it to perfection. The rudest hut of our forefathers was not erected in a

day: and in that rough outline are to be traced the principles upon which the palace of the monarch, and the temple of religion, were afterwards, by the wonderful progression of human powers towards perpetual improvement, founded. Such is man!—capable of almost boundless advancement, yet in his clearest conceptions and his wisest arrangements, requiring time to touch and to retouch, to alter and to deliberate, to prosecute and to mature his designs.

But God is the same perfectly wise Being from first to last. “His ways are not as our ways, and his thoughts are not as our thoughts; his understanding is infinite.” His conceptions and plans are complete from the beginning. Years can add nothing to the stores of his knowledge. The magnitude and extent of his schemes perplex, distract, and overwhelm us. We are unable to hold the several links of the infinite chain together; and living but an hour, we cannot comprehend designs which grasp eternity. The past, the present, and the future, are all before him, are all alike to him. His purpose, his providence, and his work, are all united. Thousands of years may intervene between the design and its accomplishment, but the thread is unbroken. A few month’s delay in our plans abates our ardour, and frequently makes us relinquish them altogether. But centuries revolve, and the purpose of Deity continues the same; his providence is silently and secretly fulfilling his

pleasure ; and the issue although delayed to the thousandth year, is infallibly certain. Whenever he has poured a little ray of light upon the future, and directed the human eye to follow it, and the human tongue to declare it, the event has justified the prediction ; and the inference is irresistible, that while man “knoweth not what a day may bring forth ;” God “sees the end from the beginning.”

Every thing that is excellent and desirable has its counterfeit. Revelation has sometimes had her claims denied ; and sometimes her majesty imitated ; but unaltered by any mode of attack, and disdaining to shrink from inquiry, she submits her pure gold to the crucible of truth, secure that it shall come brighter from that furnace which detects and consumes baser metals. Some have endeavoured to add to the volume of inspiration, and some to take away from it : and one of the strongest evidences of its authenticity is, that it remains what it was from the beginning, uninjured by all the hands through which it has passed, and unimpaired by the assaults of all those adversaries, who have in their turns been vanquished by time and by death.

THE PROGRESS OF THE GOSPEL.

THE beginnings were miraculous, but the close shall be inconceivable. Who that had seen the little band of brothers issuing from their upper chamber, in all the simplicity of their character,

unarmed, unpatronized, could have imagined that the throne of the Cæsars should feel their power, and veil its glory before them; and that the stupendous structure of Paganism, reared by philosophy, cemented by habit, and upon which state policy had built its power and authority, should vanish as a morning cloud as they advanced? Yet so it was—so went forth the word of salvation as the day breaks—its first beam distinguishing itself by its purity from the lamp of reason and the torch of philosophy; but wherever it poured its meridian splendor eclipsing all light in its surpassing radiance. So it grew as the mustard seed, “which is indeed the smallest of all seeds,” but when its maturity shall have come, not the birds of the air, but all nations of the earth, shall find repose under its shadow. So it rose as the fountain rises—a spring of living water, gushing forth; but now it is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of our God: and in the fulness of time its healing waters shall flow over all the kingdoms of the world. Its voice is more powerful than the thunder, to which science can easily point out the bounds assigned; and it is softer than the gale of the summer evening: it would seem as though the universe were constructed to convey its sound into all lands: it was whispered in the east, and round to the west—it is repeated in the west, and rolls back to the east. It is as gentle as the spring shower, and as fructifying—“the wilderness and the solitary place is made glad because

of it, and the desert rejoices and blossoms as the rose." It is all embracing, vivifying, enlightening, supplying, controlling as the sun : but the sun has his period, and "shall sleep in the clouds, forgetful of the voice of the morning." But, we repeat, what shall the end be ? It is all glorious and eternal as the heaven to which it leads—"where there is no night, for the Lord God and the Lamb are the light of it ; where the nations of the redeemed shall walk, and they shall reign with the Redeemer forever and ever. AMEN."





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